

A

CANDID REPLY

TO THE

REVEREND DOCTOR HEMMENWAY'S

REMARKS

ON A

DISSERTATION

ON THE

SCRIPTURAL QUALIFICATIONS

FOR

ADMISSION AND ACCESS

TO THE

CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS.



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THERE IS THAT SPEAKETH LIKE THE PIERCINGS OF A SWORD : BUT
THE TONGUE OF THE WISE IS HEALTH. SOLOMON.

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CANDID REPLY, &c.



INTRODUCTION.



HERE is reason to believe, that religious disputes may be of great service to the cause of truth. Our Saviour, who declined all other controversies, frequently disputed upon religious subjects. The apostle Paul encountered the Athenian philosophers, and refuted their subtil objections against Christianity, by the force of fair reasoning. And it appears, from the history of the Church, that the pen of controversy has been successfully employed, from age to age, in defending and propagating the pure doctrines of the gospel. There is as much propriety in disputing for the sake of truth, as in going to war for the sake of liberty, going to law for the sake of justice, or taking physic for the sake of health. We may, indeed, justly regret those evils, which give rise to wars, lawsuits, medicines, and religious disputes ; but we

have no reason to disapprove the practice of using these necessary means of public and private good. So long as maladies remain, we ought to make use of the proper remedies. So long as men differ in their religious sentiments, there will be occasion for religious disputes. Though it is devoutly to be wished, that all, who enjoy the gospel, might be heartily united in the belief of its great and important truths ; yet, so long as any of these are either denied or perverted, it becomes those, who are set for the defence of the gospel, to contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered to the saints. The truth will bear examination, and, therefore, it will shine the brighter, even by ill-designed and ill-conducted disputes. Every religious controversy naturally excites those, who are employed in it, to give the subject of debate a more full and thorough discussion, than the same persons would be capable of doing, without the mutual assistance of mutual opposition. And, upon this principle, we have always reason to hope, that the cause of truth will eventually gain more than it loses, by all the disputes on religious subjects.

It will, doubtless, be allowed, that the subject of the present controversy is of a practical nature, and deeply interesting to all, who believe the gospel, and acknowledge their obligations to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless. It must be the desire, therefore, of every serious and candid person, that this subject may be thoroughly discussed, and set in a just, plain, practical light.

Had I foreseen, that this controversy would have been eventually narrowed to the simple question, whether Doctor Hemmenway, or his antagonist, were the greater man, I would have declined the contest, and practically given the Doctor his just pre-eminence. Waving, therefore, a dispute, which seems

seems not so proper for the disciples of Christ, I shall only resume the more important point, which was at first proposed ; and endeavor to establish it, upon plain and permanent principles.

It was the main object of the Dissertation to prove, that none but real saints ought to partake of the Lord's supper. And this, we supposed, was the general opinion of those, who planted and composed our primitive churches. Accordingly, we said, without the least hesitation, that " the first ministers and churches of New-England were unanimously agreed, that none ought to come to the table of the Lord, but the subjects of saving grace." The truth of this observation, however, the Doctor is pleased to call in question. " It seems," says he, " to have been the general opinion, that none ought " to be admitted to full communion but true saints " in the judgment of christian charity ; and that " none ought to come but those who find reason to " hope that they are sincere. And the Discourse on " the Church expressly agrees with them in both " these points." To confirm this representation, he goes on to observe, " It is certain they held and " taught, and that unanimously so far as appears, " that doubting christians may and ought to come " to communion. Now since it is uncertain wheth- " er those who doubt their own sincerity are true " saints, if these may and ought to come to com- " munion, it can never be maintained that true " saints only ought to come. If those have an ac- " knowledged right to come, who do not certainly " appear to be saints, it can never be proved, that " true saints only have a warrant. Why should " we then think that wise and good men were unan- " imously so inconsistent? Is it not injurious to presume " such a thing, and that without sufficient evidence?"

There is no conclusive reasoning about the truth of facts. Any fact is better established by two or

three good testimonies, than by a thousand arguments. By quoting a few good authorities, the Doctor might have spared his pains in reasoning on a point, which required a different sort of proof. But, perhaps he found it much easier to reason, than to quote, upon this subject. He says, the first ministers and churches in New-England “held that *doubting christians* ought to come to communion ;” and, from this, he argues, that they must have been of opinion, if they were consistent men, that all ought to come, who find reason to *hope* they are *sincere*, whether their hope be founded in truth, or deception. But, this is very inconclusive reasoning ; because those consistent men, might have supposed, that *doubting christians*, who *have grace*, ought to come to communion ; and yet have supposed, that *doubting christians*, who are *destitute of grace*, ought not to come. The Doctor’s premises do not contain his conclusion. But, instead of opposing reasoning to reasoning, where it can be of no service ; I shall directly proceed to adduce such public and authentic testimonies, as are absolutely decisive in this case.

Four noted Ministers say, in their preface to Mr. Edwards’s Humble Inquiry, that “his doctrine, concerning the qualifications for full communion in the visible church, was brought over hither by the pious and judicious Fathers of this country, from the Puritans in England, and held by *them* and *their successors* in our churches above three-score years, *without dissension.*” And this opinion one of those four Ministers, namely, Mr. Foxcroft, abundantly confirms, in his Appendix to the same Piece, by numerous quotations, from the writings of some of the most eminent dissenters in Britain. He says, “Now to pass over to England, neither do I find reason to think the dissenters there in general are for Mr. Stoddard’s latitude.” Again
he

He says, "As to particular divines, I find multitudes
 " of them among the dissenters, in later as well as
 " in former times, distinguishing between natural and
 " instituted duties, between initial and *confirming*
 " means, between special ordinances and common,
 " and declaring the Lord's supper a disciple privi-
 " lege, peculiar to such as have disciple properties,
 " and admonishing as well the *close* hypocrite, (or
 " *doubting christian*) as the more gross, of the *sin*
 " and *danger* of coming to it in *his unregenerate*
 " *state, impenitent, and unbelieving.*"

The compilers of the Platform say, Chap. xii.
 Sect. 2, "The things requisite to be found in all
 " church members, are *repentance* from sin, and
 " *faith* in Jesus Christ; and, therefore, these are
 " things whereof men are to be examined at their
 " admission into the church, and which they must
 " profess and hold forth in such sort, as may *satisfy*
 " *rational charity* that the things are there indeed."

In the next Section they further observe, "The
 " weakest measure of faith is to be accepted in
 " those that desire to be admitted into the church,
 " because weak christians, *if sincere*, have the SUB-
 " STANCE of that faith, repentance, and holiness,
 " which is required in church members; and such
 " have the most need of the ordinances for their
 " *confirmation* and *growth* in grace. The Lord
 " Jesus Christ would not quench the smoking flax,
 " nor break the bruised reed, but gather the ten-
 " der lambs in his arms, and carry them gently in
 " his bosom. Such charity and tenderness is to be
 " used, as the weakest christians, *if sincere*, may
 " not be excluded nor discouraged."

Here the venerable Synod, who compiled the
 Platform, say, by *sincere christians*, they mean those,
 who have the SUBSTANCE, that is, the REALITY of
 repentance, faith, and holiness; and by the *weakest*
sincere christians, they mean those, who have the

lowest degree of *saving grace*. Having given this just description of *sincere christians*, they expressly declare, that such are to be admitted to special ordinances, *because* they have those *gracious* qualifications, which are *required* in church members.

To this testimony of the Synod at Cambridge, 1648, I may add the testimony of the Synod at Boston, 1680. In their Confession of Faith, they say, "ALL UNGODLY persons, as they are UNFIT
" to enjoy communion with Christ, so they are UN-
" WORTHY of the Lord's table, and *cannot* without
" *great sin* against him, whilst they remain *such*,
" partake of those holy mysteries, or be admitted
" thereto ; yea, *whosoever* shall receive unworthily
" are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,
" eating and drinking judgment to themselves."

If this learned body of divines have here used proper terms to express their own meaning, they certainly did believe and maintain, that none ought to partake of the Lord's supper, but the subjects of saving grace. And should all the churches in America now say, that this *was not* their opinion, it would not have the weight of a straw, to weaken their own public, united, solemn testimony to the contrary. We are just as certain, therefore, that the first ministers and churches of New England did maintain, that none ought to come to the table of the Lord, but the subjects of saving grace, as we are, that they did maintain any one article in either their Platform or Confession of Faith. The thing is certain, beyond a possibility of refutation.

Having settled this point, we shall proceed, with the more pleasure and confidence, in supporting a doctrine, which the Synod at Cambridge, and the Synod at Boston, unanimously taught, and from which some of their descendants have unhappily departed. But, how many of our churches have departed from the opinion of their ancestors, and gone

gone over to Mr. Stoddard's theory and practice, it may be difficult, perhaps, fully to ascertain. But, as this is a matter of no great importance, in the present dispute, we are willing to allow the Doctor's conjecture, or to leave the point in a state of uncertainty.

Since the Doctor acquits himself of reviving an old controversy, and retorts the charge upon the author of the Dissertation, he cheerfully concurs in appealing to the impartial public, who will probably regard facts, more than declarations, on either side, and eventually fix the blame upon the proper person.



CHAPTER I.

The Doctor's Remarks on "the Definition of the Church," considered.

I COMPLAINED of the Doctor's definition of the church, because he *included* infants in it; and he has complained of my definition of the church, because I *excluded* infants from it. But he had no ground to say, that I *excluded* infants from the church in my definition, as much as he *included* them in his, merely because I endeavoured to prove, *afterwards*, that they do not belong to the church. I said not a single word about infants in my definition, because I meant to treat the subject in debate fairly; and not to take, as he appeared to do, an important and disputed point for granted.

But the Doctor charges me, not only with inconsistency, but with misrepresentation. It is true, I said his definition "took some adult persons, who had made no profession of religion, not only into the visible church, but into the covenant of grace." This he calls a misrepresentation. But let us hear his definition speak for itself. The fifth article says, "Many who are members of a church in a larger sense, are not members of the *communicating* church; nor are to be admitted to the Lord's table without further qualifications." These *adult* persons, who have made no profession, and who, for that reason, have not come to the sacrament, the Doctor says, are members of the visible church, in a larger sense. But *all*, who belong to the visible church, he says, in a few lines below, "are subjects of the kingdom of heaven, *interested in* the

"the new covenant, and entitled to peculiar privileges." The Doctor is the proper judge of *his own meaning* ; but we appeal to the discerning and impartial reader to determine, whether we have *misrepresented* the plain and obvious import of *his own expressions*.



CHAPTER II.

The Doctor's Remarks on "the Covenant of Grace," considered.

SINCE the subject of this chapter appears to be closely connected with our principal design, we shall consider the Doctor's remarks upon it with particular care and attention.



S E C T. I.

His Remarks on "the general Nature of Covenanting," considered.

I SAID, in the Dissertation, that "a covenant is a mutual contract, stipulation, or agreement, between two or more parties, upon certain conditions." This definition the Doctor objects against, merely because it makes *mutual consent of parties*, absolutely essential to a proper covenant. "Whatever any may suppose," says he, "that the word covenant may signify in its strictest and most proper sense, as used among mankind, yet in scripture it is certainly used in a larger sense. A divine constitution containing a grant of special favors to the children of men, and enjoining duties as the condition of the continuance of those favors, or the grant of further ones, is, in the language of scripture, a covenant, though a personal and formal consent of the subject party were not given to it. This being the case, it is in vain

" to

“ to say that such a divine constitution is termed
 “ covenant in scripture, only in a *figurative* sense,
 “ because some circumstances and formalities re-
 “ quired in human compacts are wanting.”

We granted, in the Dissertation, that the scrip-
 ture sometimes calls an absolute, unconditional
 promise a covenant in a *figurative* sense ; but the
 Doctor here insists, that there may be a *strict* and
proper covenant, without mutual agreement, or
 consent of parties. This, then, is the turning point
 between us, whether *mutual consent of parties* be
essential to a *strict* and *proper* covenant. And to
 determine this point, I would observe,

1. The true meaning of the word covenant nec-
 essarily involves the idea of mutual consent of par-
 ties. There is no word in our language, which has
 a more uniform and definite meaning, than the word
 covenant. This term is never properly used to
 signify a bare declaration, or a bare promise ; but
 always denotes, as Johnson says, a contract, stipu-
 lation, or agreement, on certain conditions, or a
 writing containing the terms of such a mutual agree-
 ment. This is the strict and proper sense of the
 word covenant in English, as the Doctor himself
 implicitly allows. And it has the same significa-
 tion in other languages. All the Latin and Greek
 terms, which are used to represent a federal trans-
 action, properly denote a mutual contract or agree-
 ment, between two or more parties. But, it is of
 more importance to observe, that the Hebrew word,
 which is rendered covenant in the Old Testament,
 properly signifies that obligation, which persons lay
 themselves under to each other, by mutual oath,
 promise, or agreement. This sense of the word is
 confirmed by Buxtorf, and by Leigh, who quotes
 Aben Ezra as saying it signifies, “ *the mutual consent*
of two respecting any particular matter.” But Doc-
 tor Cudworth, in a Discourse concerning the true
 notion

notion of the Lord's Supper, has made it appear, that the word *Berith*, which our translators render covenant, properly denotes the union of those, who have laid themselves under solemn engagements to each other, because it is derived from a verb, which signifies to eat and drink together, agreeably to the custom of the Hebrews and other nations, in ratifying federal transactions. "Thus," says he, "when
 " Isaac made a covenant with Abimelech the king
 " of Gerar, the text saith, *He made him and those*
 " *who were with him a feast*, and did eat and drink,
 " and rose up betimes in the morning, and sware
 " one to another. Gen. xxvi.

" When Laban made a covenant with Jacob,
 " Gen. xxxi. 44, *Now therefore come*, (saith Laban)
 " *let us make a covenant, I and thou, and let it be for*
 " *a witness between me and thee* : Then it follows
 " in the text, *They took stones, and made an heap, and*
 " *did eat there upon the heap* ; and Laban called it
 " JEGARSAHADUTHA, in his Chaldee tongue, but
 " Jacob (in the Hebrew language) GALEED, i. e.
 " *a heap of witnesses* ; implying, that those stones,
 " upon which they had eaten and drank together,
 " should be a witness against either of them, that
 " should first violate that covenant.

" *Joshua ix. ver. 14*, when the Gibeonites came
 " to the Israelites, and desired them to make a
 " league with them, it is said, *The men of Israel*
 " *took of their victuals, and asked not counsel of the*
 " *mouth of the Lord* ; that is, they made a cov-
 " enant with them, as Kinski learnedly expounds
 " it.

" Wherefore I think from all these instances I
 " may conclude, that this is the true etymon of that
 " Hebrew word *Berith*, which signifies a covenant,
 " or any federal communion between parties, from
 " *Barah, confedere*, because it was the constant cus-
 " tom of the Hebrews and other Oriental nations,
 " to

“ to establish covenants by eating and drinking together.”

Thus it appears, contrary to the Doctor's assertion, that *mutual consent of parties* is *essential* to a strict and proper covenant, according to its most strict and proper meaning, as it is used both in scripture and among mankind. And this leads me to observe,

2. This scripture sense of the word covenant is abundantly confirmed, by a number of plain scriptural covenants. God required Noah to make an ark of certain dimensions ; to provide food for every species of living creatures ; to admit the male and female of each species into the ark ; and, last of all, to go in himself, with his whole family. Upon these conditions, God promised to preserve him, his family, and every species of animals. Noah complied with the conditions proposed, and God bestowed the blessings promised. This transaction, which is related in the vith of Genesis, was a strict and proper covenant, and founded in mutual consent of parties.

The covenant, which God made with Abraham, is acknowledged, by all, to be a strict and proper covenant, in the scripture sense of the word. But this covenant was a mutual contract or agreement between God and his friend, upon certain conditions. These were specified in the Dissertation. But, to put the conditionality of the Abrahamic covenant out of doubt, it may be proper to cite one passage of scripture, which appears to be decisive in this case. God promises Isaac, in Gen. xxvith, that he shall inherit the land of Canaan, because his father Abraham had kept covenant with him. “ And the Lord appeared unto Isaac, and said, Go not down into Egypt : Dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of : Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and bless thee : For unto thee, and unto

unto thy seed I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father : And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries : And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. *Because* that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

In the ixth of Joshua, we read of a federal transaction between the Israelites and the Gibeonites: According to the representation there given, Joshua and the men of Israel engaged to spare the lives of the Gibeonites, upon condition of their becoming servants to the people of God. This the Gibeonites promised, and, agreeably to this promise, Joshua spared their lives. It is said, indeed, that Joshua made a *league* with them ; but this is a translation of the same word, which is usually translated covenant, in the Old Testament. So that Joshua's mutual contract and agreement with the Gibeonites was a strict and proper covenant.

Jonathan and David covenanted together, by mutually consenting to certain conditions. These we find specified in 1 Sam. xx. 10—17. " And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go into the field. And they went out both of them into the field. And Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew thee ; the Lord do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace : And the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father. And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not : But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from
my

my house forever ; no not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the Lord even require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him : For he loved him as he loved his own soul." This mutual consent of these two faithful friends, under the solemnity of an oath, completed and confirmed their covenant.

Ahab made a proper covenant with Ben-hadad king of Syria ; and the terms, to which they mutually consented, were these. " Ben-hadad said to Ahab, The cities which my father took from thy father, I will restore : And thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away." This covenant was a mutual contract or stipulation between the two kings, upon certain conditions.

There is another federal transaction, which is related in the New Testament, and which clearly shows, that mutual consent of parties belongs to the essence of a strict and proper covenant. Matthew gives the account in these words : " Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you ? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."

It only remains to mention the covenant of grace, which is a gracious proposal of God to his sinful creatures, upon a most gracious condition. This is the uniform representation of scripture. Our Lord says, " God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And he ordered all his apostles and ministers to

propose faith as the the condition of the covenant of grace to every individual of mankind. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved : But he that believeth not shall be damned." No man can enter into the covenant of grace, and secure the blessings of it, without believing in Christ. Faith is the condition of the new and everlasting covenant. This is allowed by divines in general, and repeatedly asserted by our author in particular. In his Discourse, he says, page 21, 22, "While we disclaim
 "all pretence to merit in any qualifications wrought
 "in us, or done by us, and acknowledge ourselves
 "entirely beholden to the free grace of God, and
 "the righteousness of Christ for our salvation, with
 "all the means and qualifications whereby we are
 "made meet for the inheritance of the saints, I see
 "not why our asserting the *conditionality* of the
 "gospel covenant should be suspected of detracting
 "from the honor due to the grace of God, and the
 "merit of the power and love of our divine Re-
 "deemer. And however vague the meaning of
 "the word *condition* may seem, in itself, yet the
 "sense is fixed and determined by the explanation
 "given of it, namely, That act or qualification of
 "the party with whom the covenant is made, by
 "which, according to the tenor of the covenant,
 "the party has a title to, or is interested in, the
 "benefits therein granted or promised. In this
 "sense we conceive the new covenant may be
 "termed *conditional*." Agreeably to this, he observes, page 23, "The first act or qualification
 "which has a promise of the saving grace and blessings of the covenant is, I think, generally held to
 "be a true and living faith, whereby we are united
 "to Christ in whom all the promises are yea and
 "amen." In plainer terms still, he says, page 19,
 "Upon

“ Upon the whole, merely a *conditional* grant of
 “ covenant blessings gives no one an interest in the
 “ covenant, as the phrase is *always* understood.
 “ Nor does a *proposal* or *offer* of this conditional
 “ grant, enforced with a *divine command*, requiring
 “ men to consent to and comply with it, give men
 “ an interest in the covenant.”

Thus it appears from scripture, and from our author himself, that *mutual consent of parties* is absolutely essential to the covenant of grace, and to every other strict and proper covenant. And this warrants us to say, that the word covenant is used in the same sense in scripture and among men; that human and divine covenants are of the same nature; and that every strict and proper covenant “ is a mutual contract, stipulation, or agreement, between two or more parties, upon certain conditions.” The Doctor’s objection, therefore, against this definition, is wholly without foundation.

But, though his objection appears to be groundless; yet, it may be proper and respectful, to consider some of his most ingenious observations, in favor of it.

1. He observes, that mutual consent of parties is only a *form* or circumstance of covenanting; and, therefore, there may be a strict and proper covenant, where this form or circumstance is wanting. It is certainly true, that a mere form or circumstance is not essential to a covenant. And if mutual consent of parties be only a form or circumstance of covenanting, the Doctor’s conclusion will stand. But let us examine this matter. The *form* of any thing may be *varied*, but the *essence* of it is *immutable*. Whatever, therefore, is variable in a covenant belongs to its *form*; and whatever is immutable belongs to its *essence*. A covenant may be made at any *time*, whether morning, noon or night. It may be made at any *place*, whether public

lic or private, common or sacred. It may be made by two persons, or by twenty, or by twenty thousand. It may be made by words, or signs, or writings. These are modes and circumstances of a covenant, which may be varied, without altering the nature or obligation of it. But, mutual consent of parties must be given, at some time, in some place, and in some form or other. If this be wanting in any transaction among persons, their transaction cannot have the nature and obligation of a covenant. For, the only thing which distinguishes covenant obligations from all other obligations is mutual consent of parties. It is this, therefore, which constitutes the nature and essence of every covenant, whether human or divine. Mutual consent of parties constituted the nature and essence of all those covenants, which have been mentioned. God could not have entered into covenant with Noah, without his consenting to the terms proposed. The Gibeonites could not have entered into covenant with Joshua, without his consenting to the terms proposed. Jonathan could not have entered into covenant with David, without his consenting to the terms proposed. Ben-hadad could not have entered into covenant with Ahab, without his consenting to the terms proposed. Nor could the chief priests have entered into covenant with Judas, without his consenting to the terms proposed. The circumstances and formalities of these covenants were various; but their essence was one and the same. And this was mutual consent of parties. The circumstances and formalities of a covenant, between God and man, may be different from the circumstances and formalities of a covenant, between man and man; but the essence of both human and divine covenants must necessarily be the same. And, since mutual consent of parties does not belong to the circumstances or formalities of
any

any covenant, it must belong to the essence of it. No covenant, therefore, ever has been, or ever can be made, without mutual consent of parties being given, in some form or other. The *form* of giving mutual consent is *circumstantial*, but the *giving of it* is *essential* to any covenant, which creates mutual obligation between the parties.

2. The Doctor observes, that mutual consent of parties is not essential to a covenant, because it may *comprehend* more than the parties, who give their mutual consent. "Suppose," says he, "mutual consent of the parties, is held necessary in a proper formal covenant, yet the *actual personal* consent of *all* who are *comprehended* and interested therein is not necessary. This appears from the common sense and usages of mankind, among whom covenants are often made by authorized representatives, in which many are interested, who have not actually and personally consented. And it is abundantly evident from scripture, that in the covenants which God has condescended to make with the children of men, many were *included* without their actual and personal consent; others being authorized to covenant in their behalf."

To say that a covenant *comprehends* all, who give their explicit or implicit consent to the terms of it, is plain and intelligible language. But, to say that a covenant *comprehends* more than those, who give either their explicit or implicit consent, is ambiguous and obscure. If the Doctor means to say, that a covenant, made by mutual consent of parties, may *affect* the *interests* of others, who did not give their mutual consent, this is unquestionably true. A parent may make a covenant, without the consent of his children, which may greatly increase or diminish their *interest*. Representatives may make a contract, treaty, or covenant, without the consent of

their constituents, which may be greatly favorable or unfavorable to their *interest*. And the father of a nation may make a covenant, without their consent, which may be greatly beneficial or detrimental to them, from generation to generation. The influence of a covenant may extend to more than the parties concerned, whether they have this in view or not. But it would be very improper to say, that the parties *comprehended all* in their covenant, who were either benefited or injured by it ; or even any besides themselves.

Again : If the Doctor means to say, that a covenant may *bind* more than the parties concerned ; this may be, also, admitted. Parents may bind their children, and representatives may *bind* their constituents, by covenants, made without their consent. But, the obligation, in all such cases, is only the obligation of authority. Parents have authority to *bind* their children to whom they please, during their minority. And representatives have a right to make compacts, which shall legally bind their constituents. But, the obligation laid upon children and subjects, without their consent, by those who have authority over them, is a very different kind of obligation from that, which either children or subjects lay upon themselves, by their own consent. Though it be true, therefore, that a covenant may *interest*, or *bind*, more than the parties concerned ; and, though this were all that the Doctor meant, by saying, that a covenant may *comprehend* more than the parties, who give their consent ; yet his phraseology is by no means proper and perspicuous.

But, he evidently means more than this, by being *comprehended* in a covenant. He means, that the parties, who give their mutual consent, may lay the *same* obligation upon others, which they lay upon themselves. And this he endeavors to illustrate and

and confirm, by the common sense and usages of mankind, and by several federal transactions, which are recorded in scripture.

He says, "parents may covenant for themselves and children;" that is, lay the same obligation upon their children, which they lay upon themselves. But, this is contrary to common sense. Suppose a parent covenants with a master, upon certain conditions, that his child shall serve him seven years. And suppose the child is not consulted, but the covenant is made without his knowledge and consent. The question now is, Between whom does this covenant subsist? Common sense says, Between the parent and the master. They are mutually bound, because they mutually *promised* to perform the conditions proposed. The child is wholly passive in this transaction; and, therefore, the *bond* of the covenant, which lies upon the parent and master, does not lie upon him, nor *bind* him in the least degree. It is true, he is *bound* to obey his master, by the rightful authority of his father. But, his obligation is totally different from his father's obligation. His obligation arises from authority, but his father's obligation arises from promise. The father, in this case, lays himself under *covenant* obligation to the master; but it is out of his power, to lay his child under the *same* obligation. Hence it appears, that parents cannot covenant *for* their children, in the same sense, in which they can covenant *for* themselves, that is, lay them under *covenant* obligation. They can only covenant *about* them, and, by covenanting *about* them, lay them under obligation of authority or interest.

The Doctor further observes, that "agents covenant on the behalf of those they act for." But, it is easy to reply, that they never lay their constituents under obligation, without their consent. When agents are appointed to covenant for their constitu-

ents, their constituents always define their powers. Sometimes they authorize them only to make proposals, and ratify them with the condition, that they meet the approbation of their constituents. And, in this case, they do not lay their constituents under covenant obligation, without their explicit personal consent. Sometimes, agents are authorized to make and ratify covenants, without any revision. And, in this case, the constituents give their implicit consent. The case of agents, therefore, serves to illustrate the very truth, which the Doctor means to deny, namely, that mutual consent of parties is absolutely essential to a covenant, so that none can be laid under the obligation of it, without either an explicit or implicit consent.

The Doctor goes on to say, “ In the primitive constitution under which our first parents were placed, it appears not that their actual consent was asked for, as necessary to their coming under it. But it is certain that their posterity were interested in it without their personal consent.”

This instance is nothing to the Doctor's purpose, according to his own statement. He says our first parents were placed under a *constitution*. But it is well known, there is a wide difference between a *constitution* and *covenant*. A constitution means the same as a code or system of laws, or rules of conduct. God might, therefore, have placed our first parents and their posterity under a *constitution*, without their consent, as well as have given them any particular precept or prohibition. And we are willing to grant, that God did place our first parents under a constitution, without their consent; and that the constitution, under which they were placed, was designed to *interest* or *affect* their posterity, both in time and eternity. This may be safely allowed, without allowing, that God laid either our first parents, or their posterity,

ty, under *covenant* obligations, without their consent.

But, granting, however, what many suppose, that God did make a strict and proper covenant with our first parents ; yet, there is no reason to conclude, that it *comprehended* their posterity, to whom it was never proposed, and by whom it was never broken. It is true, we find, by the event, that by one man's disobedience, all men are become sinners ; but there is nothing in scripture, which leads us to suppose, that Adam knew, before his apostacy, that the fate of his posterity was suspended upon any part of *his* conduct. It seems, as the Doctor suggests, that God, *as a Sovereign*, constituted a connexion, between Adam's conduct and the state of his posterity, without either his or their knowledge and consent. In this way, we may account for Adam's posterity becoming *sinners*, though not for their becoming *covenant breakers*. But the Doctor must prove, that all mankind have eaten of the forbidden fruit, and so have broken the first covenant, before he can fairly argue from it, that they were all *comprehended* in it.

The last instance, which he adduces to show, that a covenant may *comprehend* more than the parties, who give their consent, is the covenant of Abraham. This covenant was made by mutual consent. God promised to bestow certain blessings upon Abraham, and his posterity, upon certain conditions, to which Abraham consented. But, though his consent to the covenant, brought himself into covenant relation, and under covenant obligation ; yet, it did not bring his posterity into covenant relation, nor under covenant obligation. No child of Abraham could, without his own personal consent to the covenant, claim any covenant relation to, or covenant blessing from God, on his father's account. This is agreeable to the opinion of an ingenious writer,

er, who has paid great attention to the Abrahamic covenant. He observes, "that whatever divine covenant there is respecting the seed and offspring of the righteous, it subsists *wholly* betwixt God, and the *parent* : All the promises of it as far as they relate to the offspring being made to the parent. Thus it was, as to Abraham, himself ; and thus it is as to all believers. No promises whatever are made to *the child* ; but whatever promises there are, are to the *parent*. All covenants contain certain conditions : And, no one hath a right, or claim, to the blessings promised in the covenant, otherwise than upon a compliance with the conditions of it."

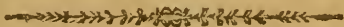
We can easily conceive that Abraham, by entering into covenant with God, and performing the conditions of it, secured blessings, not only to himself, but to his posterity. But, it is not so easy to conceive, that, by laying himself under the obligation of a promise to perform certain conditions, he laid his posterity under the *same obligation* to perform the *same conditions*, without their *promise*. And if *his* promise was not *their* promise, it is absolutely certain, that *his* promise did not bring *them* under the *bond* of the covenant, or lay *them* under the *same obligation* to perform the conditions of it, which it laid *him* under. As the covenant, therefore, *bound* him, and not his posterity ; so it *comprehended* him, and not his posterity.

It now appears, we trust, that there is no force in any thing, which the Doctor has said, to refute our definition of covenanting. And, if our definition will stand, it will probably answer the purposes, for which it was framed, and serve to decide the principal point in our favor.

S E C T. II.

The Doctor's Remarks on "the precise statement of the Covenant of Grace," considered.

WE defined the covenant of grace to be, "the promise of God to save sinners, through faith in the Mediator." This definition the Doctor allows to be agreeable to those passages of scripture, which were cited to support it. And, if those passages have once supported it, they always will support it. Hence there appears to be no occasion for remarking upon the Doctor's definition of the evangelical covenant or constitution, in its full amplitude and extent, which has no reason nor scripture to support it. It is nothing but a blending of the covenant of grace with the covenant of redemption; which he has acknowledged, in his Remarks, ought not to be done.



S E C T. III.

The Doctor's Remarks on "the distinction between the Covenant of Grace and Covenant of Redemption," considered.

THE distinction, as stated in the Dissertation, between these two covenants, the Doctor allows to be just; however inconsistent his concession may be with his definition of the covenant of grace, both in his Discourse and in his Remarks.

S E C T. IV.

The Doct̄or's Remarks on "the distinction between the Covenant of Grace and the Covenant of Abraham," considered.

THE Differtation defined the covenant of grace to be, "the promise of God to save finners, through faith in the Mediator;" from which it was inferred, that the covenant of Abraham must be distinct from the covenant of grace. This inference the Doct̄or cannot deny, without denying the definition, from which it was drawn. And since he has said nothing to invalidate the definition, the conclusion remains in its full force. But, not to lay too much weight upon a bare definition, I will endeavor to make it appear, that the covenant of Abraham was distinct from the covenant of grace.

It is allowed, on all sides, that God made a particular covenant with Abraham, in which he required him to circumcise himself and family; in which he promised to give him a numerous seed; in which he promised to give his numerous seed the land of Canaan; in which he promised to raise up a succession of pious men among his posterity; and in which he promised, that the Messiah should spring from one of his descendants. That this covenant was distinct from the covenant of grace will appear, if we consider,

1. Their different dates. The covenant of grace was proposed immediately after the fall; and all true believers, from Adam to Abraham, embraced it, and became entitled to its saving benefits. But, the covenant of circumcision was never proposed to any person before Abraham, who lived above two thousand years after the covenant of grace was made. This all must allow to be true; but, if this
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be true, how is it possible to conceive, that the covenant of Abraham and the covenant of grace are the same? It may be said, perhaps, that the covenant of Abraham was only a *renewal* of the covenant of grace. But, to this it may be sufficient to reply, that there is no more propriety in saying, that the covenant of grace was *renewed* to Abraham, than in saying, it was *renewed* to Seth, or Enoch, or any other believer after Abel.

2. The covenant of Abraham was built upon the covenant of grace. This God intimated, when he proposed to enter into covenant with Abraham. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; *walk before me, and be thou perfect.* And *I will make my covenant between me and thee.*" God here proposes to enter into covenant with Abraham, as being a pious, faithful man, or true believer. And Paul says he was such, when he entered into the covenant of circumcision. "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of *the faith* which he had being yet uncircumcised." But, if Abraham was a true believer, and interested in the covenant of grace, before he entered into the covenant of circumcision; and if this was a preliminary of his admission into that covenant, then, it will follow, that the covenant of circumcision was built upon the covenant of grace, and, of consequence, was really distinct from it.

3. If the covenant of Abraham was not distinct from the covenant of grace, then there is no more propriety in calling the covenant of circumcision the covenant of Abraham, than in calling it the covenant of Adam, or of Enoch, or of Noah, or of any other ancient patriarch. But God often mentions his memorable covenant with Abraham, as the primary ground of his distinguishing favor

to the Israelites, in Egypt, in the wilderness, and during their long residence in the land of Canaan. The covenant of Abraham, therefore, was distinct from the simple covenant of grace, or any other covenant, which God had ever made with true believers before his day. Besides,

4. It appears, that the covenant of circumcision has answered its purpose and ceased. God has made the seed of Abraham numerous ; given them the land of Canaan ; preserved the church among them for ages ; and raised up the Messiah from one of their tribes. And in consequence of this, he has cast them off, broken down the walls of separation between them and other nations, and abolished the covenant of circumcision. Believers now have no more concern with this covenant, than Enoch or Noah had before it was made. It neither requires any thing from believers now, nor promises any thing to them. They are in the simple covenant of grace, which has always been in force since the fall of man to this day. And this proves that the covenant of circumcision, which has been added to and taken from the covenant of grace, was always distinct from it.

But, here it may be said, that God made as great and precious promises to Abraham, as he now makes to believers under the gospel ; which seems to suppose, that his covenant with Abraham was no other than the covenant of grace.

To this it may be replied, that Abraham was in the covenant of grace as well as in the covenant of circumcision ; and, therefore, stood entitled to the blessings of both covenants. In the covenant of grace, God promised the same blessings to Abraham, which he had before promised to all true believers, from Adam to his day ; and which he now promises to all, who embrace the gospel. But, in the covenant of circumcision, he promised blessings,
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which he had never promised to any believers before his time ; and which he does not promise to those who now believe in Christ. Abraham had the same promises made to him in the covenant of grace, which believers now have made to them in the same covenant. And he had promises made to him in the covenant of circumcision, which are not made to believers at this day. So that the promises made to Abraham, and those made to believers under the gospel, are widely different ; and this difference proves the distinction between the covenant of grace, and the covenant of circumcision, instead of forming the least objection against it.

It may be further said, that the covenant of Abraham is called, in the New Testament, the covenant of *promise* ; and believers, under the gospel, are said to be interested in the covenant of *promise* ; which seems to imply, that the covenant of grace and the covenant of *promise* are one and the same covenant.

In answer to this, it may be observed,

1. The reason why the covenant of Abraham is emphatically styled the covenant of *promise*, is, that it contained a peculiar promise of the Messiah. God having made a general promise to Adam, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, he saw fit, about two thousand years after, to make a particular promise to Abraham, that the promised Messiah should be of his seed. But this was no article of the covenant of grace. To promise Abraham, that the Messiah should proceed from his loins, was totally different from promising him salvation, through faith in that promised Messiah. God made the promise of salvation to Abraham in common with all true believers ; but he made the promise of raising up the Messiah from his family to him in particular. And this particular promise denominated God's particular covenant with him, the covenant
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of *promise*. This accords with Paul's representation of the matter. "And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, *In thee shall all nations be blessed.*" It had been promised before, that mankind should be blessed in a Savior to come, but not that the coming Savior should spring from the loins of Abraham; so that it might be said, *in him*, all nations should be blessed. This peculiar promise God made to Abraham, in that peculiar covenant, which is most properly termed the covenant of *promise*.

2. The only reason why believers, under the gospel, are represented as being the children of Abraham, and heirs of the covenant of promise, is, that they are interested in Christ, who was the seed emphatically promised to Abraham, in the covenant of circumcision. There is no evidence, in the New Testament, that believers are now in the covenant of circumcision; but clear evidence to the contrary. For, they are neither under obligation to perform the duties of that covenant, nor entitled to any of its peculiar blessings. The bond of that covenant does not lie upon them; for they are not required to *circumcise* either themselves or their families. And it is equally evident, that they are not entitled to any of the peculiar blessings of that covenant. In that covenant, God promised to give Abraham a numerous posterity; but he makes no such promise to believers under the gospel. In that covenant, God promised, that Abraham's seed should possess the land of Canaan; but he makes no such promise to believers under the gospel. In that covenant, God promised, that Abraham's seed should enjoy great *temporal* prosperity; but he makes no such promise to believers under the gospel. In that covenant, God promised, that the Messiah should descend from his fami-

ly ; but that promise was fully accomplished at the incarnation of Christ, when the covenant of Abraham entirely ceased as the covenant of *promise*.

The blessing of Abraham, therefore, now comes to believers, only through Christ, who descended from his family, agreeably to the covenant of *promise*. Believers are now saved, upon the simple terms of the covenant of grace, just as the patriarchs were, before the peculiar covenant of Abraham was made ; and just as they would have been, had that peculiar covenant never existed. But as they are saved through faith in Christ, who was promised to Abraham as his peculiar seed ; so, on that account, and on that account only, they are called the seed of Abraham, and the heirs of the covenant of *promise*. So the apostle explains the covenant of *promise* to the believers in Galatia. “ Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many ; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the *promise*.” Agreeably to this representation, faith in Christ now brings men into that *same covenant of grace*, in which the patriarchs were, and in which Abraham himself was, before the covenant of *promise* was made. And this leads us fairly back to the conclusion drawn, before these objections were started, namely, that the covenant of Abraham, which has been added to and taken from the covenant of grace, was entirely distinct from it.

The Doctor seems to apprehend, that this distinction will destroy one of the strongest arguments in favor of infant baptism. But, perhaps, there is no ground for this apprehension. The covenant of Abraham was founded on the covenant of grace, and designed to form the seed of Abraham into a

visible church of visible saints, to be continued to the coming of Christ, and from thence to the end of the world. And this appears to be the only solid ground, upon which we can reason, from the covenant of Abraham, in favor of infant baptism. Those, who deny this doctrine, not only deny the covenant of Abraham to be the covenant of grace, but also deny the church, which was built upon that covenant, to have been composed of visible saints. They consider the covenant of Abraham, as a mere *political* or *national* covenant ; and the church, which was built upon it, as a mere *political* or *national* church. And, upon this ground, they consider the purpose of circumcision as very different from the purpose of baptism. But, if the covenant of Abraham was a *gracious* covenant, and built upon the covenant of grace, and designed to form a visible church of visible saints, which should continue through all future ages, then the purpose of circumcision was the same as the purpose of baptism in the *same church* ; and, consequently, baptism takes the place of circumcision, in the same church, and is to be applied to the same subjects, to which circumcision was formerly applied. In short, if the Old and New Testament church be the same, as we endeavored to prove in the Dissertation ; then, the analogy between circumcision and baptism can be supported ; and this being supported, it affords a strong presumptive argument in favor of infant baptism. And, if this reasoning carries me into the camp of the anabaptists, it carries me thither, not as a captive but as a conqueror.

S E C T. V.

The Doctor's Remarks on "the distinction between the Covenant of Grace and the Sinai Covenant," considered.

AFTER showing, in the Dissertation, that the Sinai covenant required the profession and exercise of grace, as the condition, upon which divine favors were promised, we attempted to prove, that it was distinct from the covenant of grace, by two plain arguments. One was, that the covenant of grace existed about two thousand years before the Sinai covenant was made. And the other was, that the covenant of grace has existed near two thousand years since the Sinai covenant was abolished.

The Doctor ingenuously concedes, that these arguments prove what they were designed to prove, namely, that the Sinai covenant, *which has been actually abolished*, was not the covenant of grace. His concession is in these words: "Indeed, if we take the Sinai covenant merely for that part of this complex constitution which appointed *temporary* ordinances, ritual and civil, for the Israelites, these taken thus abstractly, and separate from the rest, were not the covenant of grace."

But, however, he cannot admit, "that this covenant, which was temporary, required the profession and exercise of grace, as the condition, upon which spiritual and temporal favors were promised to the Jewish nation." And, though seven distinct arguments were offered to prove this proposition; yet, instead of looking them fairly in the face, he only talks round about them, for five or six pages together. We will, however, pay some attention to his loose, desultory observations.

1. He says, notwithstanding I asserted, that real holiness was the condition of the Sinai covenant;

yet, I allowed, that God took the Israelites into that covenant, and became their God, while they were destitute of real holiness.

It is easy to set this matter in a clear and consistent light. It was one thing, for the Israelites to profess *holy* obedience, and so lay themselves under the *bond* of the covenant; and quite another thing, to yield *holy* obedience, and so secure the blessings promised to them, on that condition. Again; it was one thing, for God to promise special favors to the Israelites, upon condition of their yielding *holy* obedience; and quite another thing, to be under *covenant obligation* to bestow special favors upon them. Hence it is easy to see, how the Israelites might be under the *bond* of the covenant, so as to break it, without being in it, so as to be entitled to its peculiar blessings. And it is equally easy to see, how God could avouch the Israelites to be his people; and engage to be their God, upon their *bare profession* of *holy* obedience, without being their God, or bestowing any blessings on them, in a *covenant* way. God's engagements were *conditional*; but theirs were *unconditional*. They were holden by their covenant, whether they were obedient or disobedient; but God was not holden by his covenant, unless they actually performed that *holy* obedience, which they promised. If these observations are just, they not only remove the Doctor's objections; but refute his formidable argument, which threatens to destroy seven of mine with one stroke.

He says it is a plain undeniable *fact*, that God did enter into covenant with some *graceless* Israelites, and bestow peculiar favors upon them in a covenant way. It is granted, that some *graceless* Israelites did bring themselves under covenant obligations to God; but how does it appear, that God was brought under covenant obligations to them? It is granted, that God bestowed peculiar favors upon some *graceless* Israelites;

raelites ; but how does it appear, that he bestowed those favors upon them in a *covenant* way ? This is not a fact either undeniable or proveable.

First, It cannot be proved merely from God's bestowing peculiar favors upon some *graceless* Israelites. God may bestow peculiar favors in a *sovereign* way, as well as in a *covenant* way. And since he can do this, consistently with his character, there is no reason to suppose, that he bestowed peculiar favors upon the *graceless* Israelites, at the foot of Sinai, in a *covenant* way. For, though they were bound to obey, yet he was not bound to reward them, until they did obey. Hence he bestowed peculiar favors upon *some*, in a *covenant* way, while he bestowed peculiar favors upon *others*, in a *sovereign* way. As he was under *covenant* obligation to Moses, Caleb, and Joshua, who were dutiful and obedient ; so he bestowed peculiar favors upon them, in a *covenant* way. But, as he was not under *covenant* obligation to the *graceless* part of the congregation of Israel, who were undutiful and disobedient ; so he bestowed peculiar favors upon them, in a *sovereign* way. And this was perfectly consistent with the nature and conditions of the Sinai covenant.

Secondly, It cannot be proved, that God bestowed special favors upon the *graceless* Israelites, in a *covenant* way, from the general course of his providence in connecting riches with industry, health with temperance, and honor with usefulness. God has a sovereign right to lay before men what motives he pleases, in his providence, to induce them to perform the things, which he designs they should perform. He may prosper one man to make him industrious ; and he may honor another man to make him useful. But such outward favors are no token of God's approbation of their persons and characters. For, he has never promised to manifest

his approbation of men's persons and characters, in the conduct of his providence. Hence, there is no analogy between God's providential dealings and covenant conduct, by which it can be proved, that the blessings bestowed upon the *graceless* Israelites were bestowed in a *covenant* way. But,

Thirdly, There is something in the nature of covenanting, which forbids the supposition of God's bestowing peculiar favors upon the Israelites, upon condition of their *graceless* profession and practice. Though God can bestow favors upon sinners, in a *sovereign* way, without *approving* or *rewarding* their *sin*; yet he cannot bestow favors upon them, in a *covenant* way, without making their *sin* the *condition* of his favors and rewards. But it is inconsistent with the moral rectitude of God's character, to promise men a reward, if they will commit such and such sins. Had he, therefore, promised the *graceless* Israelites, that he would *reward* them for making a false and graceless profession of obedience, he would have acted contrary to the rectitude and purity of his own nature. This was observed in the Dissertation. And this single observation is sufficient, we trust, to disprove the Doctor's undeniable *fact*, and refute his formidable argument drawn from it. We are now prepared,

2. To untie that knot of absurdities, which the Doctor has presented in a most striking light. He says, page 17th, "It seems then, according to him, that divine favors were promised in the Sinai covenant, upon condition of perfect obedience to the law, and of repentance, faith in the Mediator, and real though *imperfect* exercises of grace; and also of a profession of real godliness, though without godly sincerity. These things have the appearance of inconsistency."

It is granted, these things, which are here put together, have the appearance of inconsistency.

But

But who put them together? In the Dissertation, the point proposed to be proved was stated in these words: "The Sinai covenant required the profession and exercise of *grace*, as the condition, upon which divine favors were promised." This plain and intelligible proposition was supported by seven plain and distinct arguments. These the Doctor has declined to meddle with, which seems to be some indication of their force and pertinency. But, though he found no absurdity in the proposition itself, nor in any single argument adduced to prove it; yet he seems to think, he has found a cluster of absurdities in the proposition and arguments taken together. He suggests, that I made three distinct and inconsistent conditions of the Sinai covenant.

1. *Mere profession of real godliness, without godly sincerity.*
2. *Sincere, though imperfect, exercises of grace.*
3. *Perfect obedience, or sinless perfection.*

To reply to each of these distinctly, I would observe,

1. I did not say, that the *mere profession* of real godliness, *without godly sincerity*, was the condition of the covenant. All I said was, that the Israelites did profess real godliness, and when they had made such a profession, they laid themselves under the bond of the covenant, which obliged them to fulfil it, whether they were sincere or insincere in making it. But I never intimated, that the *bare* profession of godliness entitled them to the blessings of the covenant, or brought God into covenant with them, so long as they remained destitute of godly sincerity. For, *their* obligation to God was *unconditional*; but *his* obligation to them was *conditional*.

2. I neither directly nor indirectly said, that *sincere, though imperfect, exercises of grace*, were the condition of the covenant. It is much to be doubted, whether there are any *sincere imperfect exercises of grace*;

or exercises of grace, which are *partly* holy and *partly* sinful. It is impossible, perhaps, to conceive, that love and hatred, or submission and opposition, should be blended together, in the same exercise of heart. Holy exercises seem to be perfect in their own nature, and to exclude all *sinful* defect or imperfection. The exercise of true love is the exercise of *pure* love: And the exercise of true submission is the exercise of *pure* submission. Holiness and sin are so repugnant to each other, in their own nature, that they cannot unite together in the same exercise, or affection of heart. It was far, therefore, from my intention, to suggest or assert, that the Sinai covenant required *sincere*, though *imperfect*, exercises of grace.

3. The Doctor intimates, that I made *perfect* obedience, or *sinless* perfection, the condition of the covenant. This he collects from my saying, that the Israelites promised to obey the *moral law*, which requires *sinless* obedience.

It is true, I did say, that the ten commands were part of that body of laws, which God gave to the Israelites, and which they promised to obey. But this was saying no more than divines in general have said, and no more than the Doctor himself has implicitly granted. It concerns him, therefore, as well as others, to account for the Israelites' promising to obey a law, which he and they allow requires *perfect* obedience, or *sinless* perfection. But, since it appears, by his Remarks, that this is a task rather difficult for him to perform, I will take it upon myself.

There is no such thing as a *sinful* exercise of grace; and, therefore, every exercise of grace is *sinless*. There is no such thing as *sinful* obedience; and, therefore, all obedience is *sinless*. Accordingly, when the Israelites promised to obey the moral law, they promised to obey it perfectly; and when they did obey

obey the moral law, they did obey it perfectly. But their obedience was, undoubtedly, *inconstant*; for it is generally granted and believed, that saints are not always in the exercise of grace; or, in other words, that they do not always obey the moral law. And it appears, from the history of the people of God, that some of the best among them, did actually disobey some of the ten commands. But, though God made provision for the Israelites' being *sinful*, yet he made no provision for their being *graceless*. For, though he might consistently promise to bestow his favors upon condition of *perfect* obedience; yet, he could not consistently promise to bestow his favors upon condition of *perfect* disobedience. Their disobedience, therefore, he disapproved; but their obedience he approved and rewarded. It is allowed, by all, that God may approve and reward the *real holiness* of those, whom he pardons through the atonement of Christ. And, if this be true, then all penitent Israelites could sincerely make, and sincerely keep the Sinai covenant; and God could consistently be *their* God, *their* shield, and *their* exceeding great reward, notwithstanding the *inconstancy* of their obedience. This leads me to observe,

In the last place, that what I did say and mean in the proposition, which I laid down, and in the arguments, which I offered to support it, contains no inconsistency. I said, that God required the Israelites to be *true saints*, as the condition of their enjoying the blessings of the Sinai covenant: And that they professed to be of this character. And this neither implies that God entered into covenant with them as *graceless* persons, nor as *sinless* persons; but as *gracious* persons of a middle character, who sometimes feel and act *right*, but sometimes feel and act *wrong*.

The Doctor's Remarks on the *iiid* chapter of the Dissertation appear unworthy of himself, and, of course, unworthy of particular notice.

CHAPTER III.

The Doctor's Denial that "none are required to profess Religion but true Saints," considered.

WE are now come to that point of importance in the present dispute, which the Doctor supposes the whole cause may turn upon. Here, then, his Remarks require particular attention. He allows, that christians ought to make a public profession of religion, and he approves the practice of our churches in admitting members in this form. But he denies, that the compilers of the Platform held such an exprefs public manner of profession to be absolutely necessary, by divine institution. "They conceived," says he, "that the substance of what is required is kept, where there is a real agreement and consent of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one congregation for the public worship of God, and their mutual edification; which real agreement and consent they do exprefs by their constant practice, in coming together for the public worship of God, and by their religious subjection to the ordinances of God there." This passage, from the 4th article of the iyth chapter of the Platform, affords no evidence, that the Compilers did not hold a *public profession* of religion to be necessary, by divine institution; because they are not speaking upon the subject of *making a profession*, but of professors uniting together in a particular church. But it appears, by what they say in the iiid chapter of the Platform, that they did hold a *public profession* of religion to be necessary, by divine authority.

authority. The reader is desired, if he have the Platform by him, to turn to the places, which have been mentioned, and form his own opinion of this instance of the Doctor's conduct.

After this gross misrepresentation, he proceeds to state the principal point in dispute. "The subject," says he, "of our present consideration lies in these two inquiries, whether those, who, after serious examination, find that, so far as they are conscious, they do sincerely believe the gospel, and approve and consent to the covenant of grace therein proposed, may and *ought* to profess, though they should so far doubt of, or disbelieve their being subjects of sanctifying grace, that they dare not profess that their faith and religion are saving?"

"2. Whether it be not supposable, and credible, that some who can so profess are not saints in heart?"

These two queries may be comprised in this single question: Whether those, who are conscious of sincerely believing the gospel, though they are *not saints in heart*, *ought* to make a public profession of religion?

But this question is quite different from that, which was proposed in the Dissertation, and upon which the Doctor allows the whole cause turns. It was proposed, in the Dissertation, to prove, that "none but true saints are *required* to profess religion." And this is the point, which, the Doctor says, the whole cause turns upon. Why, then, did he shift *this main point* in dispute, and substitute another? It is one question, whether none but *saints in heart* are *required* to profess religion? and quite another question, whether none but *saints in heart*, *ought* to profess religion? The last question depends upon the first, and cannot be determined, without determining the first. For those, and only those,

those, *ought* to profess religion, who are *required* to profess religion. If the Doctor had first proved, that *some*, who are *not saints in heart*, are *required* to profess religion; he might then have fairly drawn the consequence, that *some*, who are *not saints in heart*, *ought* to profess religion. According to all the rules of fair reasoning, it was incumbent upon him, to determine who are *required* to profess religion, before he undertook to determine a case of conscience, which turned wholly upon that point. By thus shifting the *fundamental* point in dispute, he has practically given up the whole cause. Here, then, I might justly dismiss the subject of this chapter; but, for the sake of illustrating a practical truth of great importance, I will distinctly consider the four following questions.

1. Does God require any but real saints to profess religion?
2. What is the essential difference between a *doubling* sinner and a *doubling* saint?
3. Is it the duty of a *doubling* sinner to profess religion?
4. Is it the duty of a *doubling* saint to profess religion?

Question 1. Does God require any but real saints to profess religion? This question must be answered in the negative, for various reasons.

1. None suppose, that God requires *all* sinners to profess religion. Mr. Stoddard supposes, that none but morally honest and orthodox sinners ought to profess their faith. And our author restricts this duty to such sinners only, as are conscious of sincerely believing the gospel, and consenting to the covenant of grace. Should it be granted, that such sinners may be found; yet, it is much to be doubted, whether any divine command can be found, which requires sinners of this description, in distinction from others, to profess religion. The Bible

ble requires all true saints, who love Christ supremely, to profess him publicly before the world. But where does it require *any*, who are destitute of such supreme affection to Christ, to make such a profession? If the commands, which require *saints in heart* to profess religion, do not require the same duty of *all* sinners, they do not require it of *any*. And if the commands directed to *saints*, do not require *sinners* to profess religion, what commands do? Are there any directed to *doubting* sinners in particular, which require them, in distinction from those, who *know* themselves to be graceless, to profess their faith? If there be any such commands, they have never yet been pointed out. And until they are pointed out, we shall not scruple to say, that no sinner, of any description whatever, is required to make a christian profession.

2. To suppose, that God requires *doubting* sinners, in distinction from others, to profess religion, is to suppose, that he grounds his requisition upon their *false opinion* of themselves. A *doubting* sinner, according to the Doctor's description of one, is a person who is *conscious* of believing the gospel, and consenting to the covenant of grace; but who, at the same time, is uncertain whether his belief of the gospel and consent to the covenant of grace, arises from *holiness of heart*. He doubts whether he is a *saint*, and he doubts whether he is a *sinner*. But he is, however, totally destitute of grace; and, therefore, his *doubting* with respect to the state of his mind, necessarily implies a *false opinion* of himself. Now, it is absurd to suppose, that God should require such a *doubting* sinner, in distinction from others, to profess religion. Such a requisition would be naturally calculated to lead sinners to form a false and unreasonable opinion of themselves. And can we suppose, that God would give countenance, by his command, to such delusion and self-deception,

self-deception, contrary to his solemn caution, "Let no man deceive himself?"

3. If God should require *doubting* sinners to profess religion, he would require them to act contrary to his first and great command, which says to every man, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." This precept requires every person to have religion; and to have it immediately. But *doubting* sinners are destitute of the love here enjoined; and, therefore, if God should require them in particular to profess religion, he would require them to act without that love, which he requires them to exercise in every action. So that this first and great command, amounts to a prohibition against any sinner's professing religion, with an unholy or graceless heart.

4. All who are destitute of grace are implicitly forbidden to make a religious profession. "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" The person here addressed appears to be a strict observer of the externals of religion. For, in the preceding verses, God says to the same person, "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me." This person, however, properly represents sinners in general, and what God says to him he implicitly says to all, who are destitute of grace. Solomon says, "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he has no pleasure in fools: Pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." By fools here, the wise man means sinners, and these he implicitly forbids to make vows and covenants, which they have no heart to fulfil. To the same import is that noted passage in the eleventh chapter of

of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. "Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." The examination here enjoined upon the Corinthians, plainly refers to the *heart*, and not to external conduct, or doctrinal knowledge. They had no occasion of examining themselves, whether they understood the design of the Lord's supper, or the proper external mode of attending it. But they had great occasion of examining themselves, whether they had attended the memorials of Christ's death, with a spiritual discerning of his spiritual beauty and excellence. This, then, is the plain and important meaning of the apostle's words: "Let a man examine his heart, and if he finds it pure and upright, let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, which is instituted for the upright in heart. But if he finds his heart blind and corrupt, let him beware of eating and drinking judgment to himself." These passages of scripture, which we have mentioned, do, by a fair construction, exclude all who are destitute of grace, from making a profession of religion, and from coming to the table of the Lord.

5. If God should require *doubting* sinners to profess supreme love to him, he would require them to profess a falsehood. They love themselves supremely, and, therefore, cannot, consistently with truth, profess supreme affection to their Creator. The graceless Israelites, who professed supreme love to God in the wilderness, are charged with hypocrisy and lying. "When he slew them, then they sought him; and returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock,

rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless, they did *flatter* him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongues. For their *heart was not right with him*, neither were they stedfast in *his covenant*." When these persons made a profession of religion, it seems, they were very serious and conscientious. They sought God, returned to him, and inquired early after him. They remembered his sparing and preserving mercy. And, so far as they were conscious of their own feelings, they doubtless thought, that they loved God, consented to his covenant, and were willing to fulfil the conditions of it. But yet these sincere sinners are charged with *flattering* God, and even *lying* to him, because their *hearts* were destitute of saving grace. The Doctor, indeed, could exculpate such sincere sinners, because they think they say nothing but what is true. This looks like a plausible excuse. But its plausibility arises from not distinguishing between *voluntary* and *involuntary* errors. If a man thinks another's heart is good, when it is not, his error is involuntary; but if he thinks his own heart is good, while it is totally corrupt, his error is voluntary. Every man may know his own heart, if he will but honestly and impartially examine it. So that all false professors, if they are ignorant of their own hearts, are *willingly* ignorant of them; and voluntary ignorance can afford them no excuse. The most sincere hypocrite is chargeable with flattery and falsehood, in professing to love God supremely. God, therefore, neither requires nor allows *doubting* sinners to profess that supreme love to him, which they cannot profess, without flattery and lying. He requires sinners to have saving faith, before they profess to embrace the gospel, and consent to the covenant of grace.

I will now venture to add,

6. The Doctor himself appears to maintain, that none but true believers are required to profess religion. He says in his Discourse, page 26th, "That qualification, whatever it be, by which we are savingly united to Christ, has a chain of privileges connected with it, *issuing in eternal salvation*. These privileges are also *connected with the essential and fundamental virtues and graces required in the gospel*. The *habit and principle* of these is *connected with the proper acts and expressions of them in the life*. And these expressions and evidences of *inward sanctification* are *connected with a right to peculiar external privileges*: Whence arise special obligations, a *compliance with which has further blessings annexed*. Duties qualify for, and entitle to privileges; and privileges qualify for, and give a right or warrant to perform duties. But the relation, reference, or respect which the duties and blessings of the covenant have to each other in this connexion, requires to be further considered. And in the first place the *order in which they are connected* is to be noted. Some are *prior*, or before others in the order of nature, or of time. Thus in the order of nature the *call of the gospel, accompanied with the influences of the Spirit*, is a divine favor going before *saving faith*. Faith, (saving faith) whether we consider it as a *duty*, or a *gift of God*, precedes a *saving union to, and interest in Christ*, and justification and righteousness, with all those benefits which accompany or flow from it. THE BELIEF OF THE HEART IS PRESUPPOSED IN THE PROFESSION OF THE MOUTH."

By the belief of the heart here, we are obliged to understand *saving faith*. The phraseology requires this meaning. The belief of the heart is a phrase commonly used by divines, to distinguish *saving faith* from a mere *speculative or doctrinal faith*.

faith. And the apostle uses the same phrase in the same sense when he says, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Besides, the connexion, in which the Doctor uses this mode of speaking, obliges us to understand him as meaning *saving* faith. For, the faith which he had just been speaking of, was that which originates from God, which flows from the Spirit, which unites to Christ, and which issues in eternal salvation. After such a striking description of *saving* faith, he immediately adds, "THE BELIEF OF THE HEART IS PRESUPPOSED IN THE PROFESSION OF THE MOUTH." Now, if *this belief of the heart*, in this chain of *gracious* qualifications issuing in eternal salvation, do not signify *saving* faith, it will be extremely difficult to perceive the Doctor's good sense in this long chain of reasoning. But if it does signify *saving* faith, as we did suppose, and do still suppose, then this strong and invincible chain must bind the Doctor and every other person to believe, that God requires none but real saints, or those who have saving grace, to profess religion. And if the whole cause must turn upon this point, it must turn in our favor.

Question II. What is the essential difference between a *doubting* sinner and a *doubting* saint?

The plausibility of all the Doctor says to prove, that *some* who are destitute of grace ought to make a profession of religion, arises from his making no distinction between *doubting* sinners and *doubting* saints. For he reasons thus: "If some who doubt whether they are true believers may and ought to profess their faith, as all allow, then such evidences as leave it uncertain whether a man be a true believer, may satisfy him that he may and ought to be a professor." Through all his observations on this head, he ranks all *doubting* persons together, whether saints or sinners, without any distinction.

inction. This serves to confuse the mind, and to throw the real subject of dispute into obscurity. For we do not mean to deny, that doubting *saints* ought to profess their love to Christ, and attend his gracious institutions ; though we mean to deny, that this is the duty of doubting sinners. This difference in point of duty, between *doubting* sinners and *doubting* saints, arises from an essential difference in their religious characters. And the question now is, Wherein does this essential difference consist ? In answer to this, it may be observed,

1. A *doubting* sinner is *wholly* destitute of grace. He has not the love of God in him. His heart is full of evil. All his moral exercises are entirely sinful. But a *doubting* saint is one who is born of God, who has a new heart, and who is a partaker of the divine nature. All allow, that a person of this description may be *doubtful*, whether he has passed from death to life, or really become a new creature. In a word, a *doubting* saint has *some* grace, but a *doubting* sinner has *none*. This leads me to observe,

2. That a *doubting* sinner has *no* evidence of grace. Grace is the only proper evidence of grace. Though a sinner may be *conscious* of believing the gospel in speculation, and of feeling such religious affections as he calls love, repentance, submission, and zeal in the cause of religion ; yet he has no right to conclude, from any or all these things, that he is a true saint. The reason is, all these things are distinct from grace, and may exist without the least degree of holiness. Accordingly, the scripture represents grace as the only proper evidence of itself. " If children, then heirs," says the apostle Paul. And the apostle John says, " My little children, let us not love in words, neither in tongue ; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we *know* that we are of the truth, and shall *assure* our hearts

before him." A doubting *sinner* has no such true love, and therefore no such real evidence of grace. But a doubting *saint* has *some* such true love, and therefore *some* such real evidence of grace.

Question III. Is it the duty of a *doubting sinner* to profess religion?

The Doctor says this is the duty of *some* doubting sinners. He maintains, that any person, who is conscious of believing the gospel, and consenting to the covenant of grace, may and ought to profess his faith, notwithstanding any doubts and fears concerning his state of grace.

But if no sinner have any religion, nor any evidence of religion, then no sinner, whether *doubtful*, or not doubtful of the true state of his mind, has a right to make a religious profession. His first work is to believe in Christ, and give God the supreme affection of his heart. He ought to become a true friend of God, and have evidence of his friendship to him, before he professes to be his friend. If, while destitute of grace, he should profess religion, God might justly demand, "Who hath required this at your hand?" Or say, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" And to such serious and pertinent questions, he must be entirely speechless. If a doubting *sinner* ought to determine his duty, with respect to professing religion, either by the commands of God, or by the exercises of his own heart, then he ought to determine, that he has no right to name the name of Christ, nor appear among his friends at his table.

This solution of the question before us, we are happy to confirm, by the authority of a most eminent Casuist. Mr. BAXTER asks this question.* "May an ungodly man receive the sacrament, who knoweth not himself to be ungodly? *Ans.* No; for

for he ought to know it, and his sinful ignorance of his own condition, will not make his sin his duty."

Again, he puts another question of a similar nature, in a different form.* "Wherein lieth the sin of an hypocrite, and ungodly person, if he do receive? *Ans.* His sin is, 1. In *lying* and *hypocrisy*; in that he professeth *unfeignedly to repent of sin*, and *to be resolved for an holy life*, and to believe in Christ, and to accept him on his *own* covenant terms, and to give up himself to God, as his Father, his Savior and Sanctifier, and to forsake the *flesh*, the *world*, and the *devil*; when indeed he never did any of this; but secretly abhorreth it at his heart, and will not be persuaded to it: And so all this *profession*, and his very *covenanting* itself, and his *receiving*, as it is a *professing sign*, is nothing but a very *lie*. And what it is to lie to the Holy Ghost, the case of *Ananias* and *Sapphira* telleth us. 2. It is *usurpation* to come and lay claim to those benefits, which he hath no title to. 3. It is a *profanation* of those holy mysteries, to be thus used, and it is a taking of God's name in vain, who is a jealous God, and will be sanctified of all that draw near unto him. 4. It is a *wrong* to the church of God, and the communion of saints, and the honor of the christian religion, that such ungodly hypocrites *intrude* as members.

"*Object.* But it is no lie, because they think they say true in their profession. *Ans.* That is through their sinful negligence, and self-deceit: And he is a liar that speaks a falsehood, which he may and ought to know is a falsehood, though he does not know it. There is a liar in *rashness* and *negligence*, as well as of *set purpose*." It now appears, we trust, that a *doubting* sinner has no more right to profess religion, than one who knows himself to be graceless.

Question IV. Is it the duty of a *doubting* faint to profess religion ?

It is said by many, and often repeated by the Doctor, that those who maintain saving grace to be a necessary qualification for communion at the Lord's table, must, in order to be consistent, deny it to be the duty of a *doubting* faint to profess religion and attend special ordinances. For, it is insinuated, if grace be absolutely necessary, then the *assurance* of grace is equally necessary, to justify a person's access to the Lord's supper. But if we can make it appear, that a *doubting* faint ought to profess religion and attend the sacrament, then we shall remove this supposed embarrassment from our side of the question. Let us inquire, then, whether a *doubting* faint may lawfully and conscientiously profess religion ?

This question may be answered in the affirmative, upon principles already established. We have shown, that a *doubting* faint is a subject of saving grace, and, being a subject of saving grace, has the witness in himself, that he is in a state of grace. His own exercises of grace are real evidences in his favor ; and, so far as he *discerns* these, he *discerns* real evidences of being born again and reconciled to God. These evidences *obscurely discerned* give him *hopes*, while his remaining imperfections and corruptions give him *doubts*. In this situation he is a *doubting* faint. But since his hopes are well founded, and the commands of God apply to him, and require him to profess religion, it is *his duty* to profess Christ before men. He loves Christ supremely, and he thinks he loves him supremely ; his only difficulty is, that he doubts of the *sincerity* of his love. But his doubts are groundless, and ought to be given up ; and though he does not wholly give them up, yet if his hopes so far prevail, that his conscience tells him it is his duty to profess religion,

religion, his way is clear, though he has not attained to full assurance of grace. Mr. Edwards says, and our author says the same, that the *dictate of a right conscience* lays a man under immediate obligation to act. As soon, therefore, as a *doubting* saint has a prevailing hope of his good estate, and feels the dictate of his conscience requiring him to profess religion, it immediately becomes his duty to profess Christ before men, and attend his special institutions. His opinion and conduct are well founded, that is, upon real evidence, and therefore will be well accepted in the sight of God, who looketh on the heart, and requireth truth in the inward parts.

Here again we shall take shelter under the wing of Mr. BAXTER, who has accurately stated and judiciously solved the principal difficulties, which have been or can be started, upon this case of conscience. He asks and answers a number of important questions.*

“ Quest. Must a sincere christian receive, that is uncertain of his sincerity, and in continual doubting ?

“ Ans. Two preparations are necessary to this sacrament ; the general preparation, which is a state of grace ; and the particular preparation, which consisteth in his present actual fitness : And all the question is of this. And to know this, you must further distinguish between immediate duty and more remote, and between degrees of doubtfulness in christians. 1. The nearest immediate duty of the doubting christian is, to use the means to have his doubts removed, till he know his case, and then his next duty is, to receive the sacrament ; and both these still remain his duty in this order. And if he say, I cannot be resolved, when I have done my best. Yet certainly it is some sin of his own, that keep-

eth him in the dark, and hindereth his assurance ; and therefore duty ceaseth not to be duty : The law of Christ still obligeth him, both to get assurance and to receive ; and the want both of the knowledge of his state, and of his *receiving* the *sacrament*, are his continual sin, if he live in it ever so long, through these scruples. But you will say, *What if still he cannot be resolved whether he have true faith and repentance, or not ? What shall he do while he is in doubt ?* I answer, it is one thing to ask, what is his duty in this case, and another thing to ask, *What is the smaller or less dangerous sin ?* Still his duty is both to get the *knowledge of his heart, and to communicate. But while he sinneth* (through infirmity) *in failing of the first, were he better also omit the other or not ?* To be well resolved of that, you must discern, 1. Whether his judgment of himself, do rather incline to think and hope that *he is sincere in his repentance and faith, or that he is not ?* 2. Whether the consequences are like to be good or bad to him ? If his hopes that he is *sincere*, be as great or greater than his *fears* of the contrary, then there is no such ill consequent to be feared as may hinder his communicating ; but it is his best way to do it, and wait on God in the use of his ordinance. But if the persuasion of his gracelessness be greater than the hopes of his sincerity, then he must observe how he is like to be affected, if he do communicate. If he find it is like to clear up his mind, and increase his hopes by the actuating of his grace, he is yet best to go : But if he find that his heart is like to be overwhelmed with horror and sunk into despair, by running into the supposed guilt of unworthy receiving, then it will be worse to do it, than to omit it."

Again, he puts another similar question. "*Must no man come to the sacrament, that is uncertain or doubtful of the sincerity of his faith and repentance ?*"

Ans.

Ans. 1. He that is sure of his unsoundness and hypocrisy, should not come. He that upon trial is not sure, yet so far as he understands his own heart and life, doth judge himself an impenitent hypocrite, should use other means to know himself certainly, and fullier to repent before he cometh. And though some melancholy and timorous persons be falsely persuaded that they are impenitent, *yet it is better that such forbear the sacrament, while they use other means for the better acquaintance with themselves, than that all the hypocrites and wicked impenitent people be told that it is their duty to come, if they can but make themselves uncertain, whether they be impenitent or not.*

“ 2. But he that after the best endeavors he can use to know himself, can say, *I am not certain that I truly repent, but as far as I know my own heart I do*; is not to be hindered from the sacrament by that uncertainty. 1. For few of the best attain to a full certainty of their own sincerity. 2. And all that can be expected from us is, that we proceed *according to the best of our understandings*, and the best acquaintance with ourselves that we can get. 3. And otherwise it would keep us from all other duties proper to true christians; as from thanksgiving for our justification, sanctification, adoption, &c. 4. He that only erreth about the nature of true faith and repentance, and not about the reality of it in himself, should not be kept away by that error; as if he can say, *As far as I know my own heart, I am willing to part with every known sin, and to know every sin that I may part with it; but I am afraid this is not repentance*; or he that saith, *I believe the gospel to be true, and I am willing to have Christ upon his covenant terms, and wholly resign myself unto him; but I am afraid yet that I am not a true believer.* This person is truly penitent, and is a true believer, and therefore ought to come.

5. The

5. The case *de esse*, whether a man be a true christian or not, is in order before the case *de scire*, whether he be certain of it, or not. He that is an hypocrite, is bound by God first to *know* that he is so, and then to repent, and then to *communicate*. He that is *sincere*, is bound by God, to *know* that he is *sincere*, and to be thankful, and to communicate. And man's neglect of one duty will not make God change his laws, which still bind him to all this at once.*

Thus it appears, by what has been said and quoted, that *none* but true saints are *required*, and of consequence, *ought* to make a publick profession of religion. And if this cardinal point be firmly established, the Doctor allows, the whole cause must turn in our favor.

* P. 678.



CHAPTER IV.

The Doctor's Remarks on "the description of visible Saints," considered.

SINCE the Doctor's idea of visible saints appears to be taken from his idea of the *judgment of charity*, which will fall under consideration in the next chapter, I shall here only rectify his misrepresentation of one particular expression in the Dissertation. "It is a given point, I said, that all visible saints are proper subjects of special ordinances." "If so," says he, "then some *graceless* persons are "proper subjects of special ordinances; and certainly all proper subjects have a right of admission "and access to them." He had made a distinction between the right of *admission* and the right of *access*, with which I expressly concurred. It was to be presumed, therefore, that my expression had respect to the right of *admission* only, and not any respect to the right of *access*. My description of visible saints was immediately connected with the right of *admission*, which was to be considered in the next chapter. And this connexion directed and restricted my meaning to the right of admission only. Besides, I explained it by the very next words, which were these: "If it could only be determined, *therefore*, who are visible saints, ONE PART of the present controversy would be completely settled." Why not the whole? Because it is not a *given point*, that all visible saints have a right of *access*, though it is a *given point*, that all visible saints have a right of *admission*. This was a full and fair explanation of my observation, which the Doctor has so repeatedly misinterpreted, and misapplied in his Remarks. He is desired to try this case, in the same court, in which, he says, the right of access is to be tried.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER V.

*The Doctor's Remarks on "the right of admission,"
considered.*

THE question, which we proposed to discuss, in this chapter of the Dissertation, was stated in these words: "Whether the church may admit any to communion, but those *who appear to them to be real saints?*" This statement the Doctor calls ambiguous, and says, "If the meaning of it be, whether a church may or ought to admit any but such as exhibit or hold forth to their view signs or evidences of grace, it is expressly declared in the Discourse on the Church, that none may or ought to be admitted but *visible saints*, who exhibit such evidence of grace, that, according to gospel rule, by which a church ought to judge of professors, they ought to *be held, reputed, and regarded as true saints*, in a judgment of charity."

This looks very much like our statement; but it appears, by what the Doctor says afterwards, that the terms *held, reputed, and regarded as true saints*, are ambiguous. For, he does not mean by them, that we are to *think or believe*, that a visible saint, who exhibits scriptural signs of grace, is a true saint. We will give his opinion at large, in his own words.

"We may hold and receive one as a true saint in a judgment of charity, of whom we have no such evidence as will oblige us to determine, absolutely, whether he be certainly, or most probably a saint in heart. For the judgment of charity is formed according to the rule which is given to the church, to distinguish those whom they are
to

“ to admit to communion, from those who are to
 “ be refused. According to this rule, professors of
 “ true religion, who are not scandalous, are all
 “ visible saints, and to be received and held for
 “ true saints in a judgment of charity. And yet
 “ the scriptures assure us, that many of these, and
 “ no one knows how many, are not sincere. So
 “ that after it appears ever so plain that men’s lives,
 “ and creed, and profession are good, and conse-
 “ quently that they are visible saints, we know not
 “ whether one half of them are sincere. And if
 “ we absolutely believe that each one is a true
 “ saint, it is as absurd and unreasonable, as if we
 “ should absolutely believe that each ticket in a
 “ lottery will draw a prize; or that the first, sec-
 “ ond, third numbers, &c. will be prizes, though
 “ we know there will be many blanks: For a man’s
 “ being a visible saint, and so a proper object of
 “ christian charity, makes it no more certain that
 “ he is a saint in heart, than his having a ticket
 “ makes it certain that it will be a prize. Men
 “ may be as pert and positive as they please, in
 “ their assertions, but unless they can prove that
 “ all, or at least the greater part of visible saints,
 “ who are to be received as true saints in a judg-
 “ ment of charity, are also real saints in heart, they
 “ will never persuade reasonable men, who ground
 “ their belief only on sufficient evidence, that none
 “ may be received to the communion and charity
 “ of a church, but those who they have reason to
 “ *think or believe* absolutely are certainly, or at least
 “ *most probably* true saints.”

In this paragraph, the Doctor asserts, that we
know not whether one half of professors are *sincere*.
 This is a very safe assertion; because we know not
 any professor’s *heart*. Again, he asserts, that a
 man’s being a *visible* saint, and so a proper object
 of christian charity, makes it *no more certain*, that
 ke

he is a faint in heart, than his having a ticket in a lottery, makes it certain that he will draw a prize. If by *no more* certain he means barely *not certain*, this is a safe assertion; because we all allow, that there are no *certain* signs of grace, by which we can *know* that others are good men. But he proceeds a step further, and asserts, that unless we can prove that the *greater* part of visible saints are faints in heart, we have no right to *think* or *believe*, absolutely, that the most eminent *visible* faint is *certainly*, or *most probably*, a faint in heart. Here seems to be a studied obscurity. The adverbs absolutely, certainly, and most probably, either have no meaning, or convey false ideas. If we may *really* think or believe, that a visible faint is a faint in heart; then we may *absolutely* think or believe, that he is most probably, or certainly, a faint in heart. For, our *absolutely* thinking or believing this of a visible faint, does not amount to our *bare* knowing, or *probably* knowing, or *most probably* knowing, or *certainly* knowing, that he is a faint in heart.

The Doctor's assertion, stripped of all obscurity, is no more than saying, unless the church can *know*, that more than half of credible professors are faints in heart, they cannot, according to the *doctrine of chances*, really *believe* or *think*, that any professor, however pious in appearance, is a faint in heart. But, what has the doctrine of chances to do in this case? Is the judgment of charity to be formed upon it? The Doctor says no; and blames us for saying, in the Dissertation, that he argued from this topic. But, it now fully appears, that he did argue from it, does argue from it, and insists that we must argue from it. For, he says, we must prove, that more than half of credible professors are faints in heart, before we may venture to say, that the church must receive none to communion, but those who they *think* or *believe* are subjects of saving grace.

grace. This we grant is true, if the judgment of charity must be *wholly* founded on the *doctrine of chances*. But we deny, that the judgment of charity is to be founded upon this doctrine, for two reasons.

One is, that we cannot form any judgment at all, respecting the sincerity of a visible saint, according to the doctrine of chances. Since God has nowhere told us, what proportion of visible saints are sincere, we cannot determine whether more or less than half are sincere, and consequently cannot form any judgment at all, according to the doctrine of chances, whether it is probable, or improbable, that any particular professor is a saint in heart. When we know the proportion between the number of *blanks* and *prizes* in a lottery, we may form some probable opinion, whether a particular ticket will prove fortunate. If there be as many *prizes* as *blanks*, then we may determine the chance is equal, that any particular ticket will draw a prize. But if the number of blanks be more than double to the number of prizes, then it is probable, that any particular ticket will draw a blank. But if we are totally ignorant of the proportion between the blanks and prizes in a lottery, we can form no probable opinion at all, respecting the fortune of any particular ticket. Just so it is in the case before us. Since we have no knowledge of the proportion between sincere and insincere professors, we can form no probable opinion at all, whether any particular professor be a saint in heart, according to the doctrine of chances. This, therefore, cannot be the ground of a judgment of charity.

But, there is another reason why the judgment of charity is not to be built upon the doctrine of chances. It is this. All visible saints exhibit *signs* of grace; and these afford a proper foundation for a judgment of charity. Tickets have *no signs* of success. The first number has no more *signs* of success

success than the second, or third, or last. But, a *visible* saint has more signs of grace, than one who is not a visible saint. And one visible saint has more signs of grace than another. This is agreeable to the Doctor's opinion. He says, and all the world agree with him, *the judgment of charity ought to keep pace with the signs of grace*. If one professor exhibits more and clearer *signs* of sincerity, than of insincerity, then we have more reason to think he is sincere, than insincere. Or if one professor exhibits more and clearer signs of sincerity than another, then we have more reason to think he is sincere, than the other, who exhibits fewer and less clear signs of sincerity. Or if any particular professor exhibits many and great signs of sincerity, and no signs to the contrary, then our charity may rise in proportion to his visibility of grace, though it falls short of absolute certainty or full assurance. So that the signs of grace, which appear in professors themselves, not only lay a proper foundation for a judgment of charity in their favor; but for a judgment of charity, in some cases, which amounts to the *highest probability*, or that which is next to moral certainty. The church's charity, therefore, ought to be in exact proportion to the *signs of grace*, which appear in every proponent, without the least regard to the doctrine of chances, which can neither increase, nor diminish the *signs of grace*, upon which alone their judgment of charity can be reasonably founded. If they *knew* the exact proportion between *sincere* and *insincere* professors, this knowledge would not destroy the *signs of grace* in any particular proponent, and therefore ought not to alter their opinion of him. But, since they are utterly ignorant of the proportion between true and false professors, this proportion ought not so much as be brought into view, in forming their judgment of charity; but they ought to admit

mit such, and only such, as bear *probable* marks of sincerity.

Uncertainty does not destroy probability. It is *uncertain* whether my friend, whom I saw yesterday, in high health, is now alive; but yet it is *very probable* he is now alive. So, it is *uncertain* whether the most amiable and shining professor is a saint in heart; but yet it is *probable*, and even *most probable*, that he is a subject of saving grace. Hence the Doctor's similitude is totally foreign from his purpose, because it proves the very thing which he meant to disprove. It proves, that uncertainty does not destroy probability. So that, notwithstanding all he has said about the *uncertain* proportion between sincere and insincere professors, and about the *uncertainty* of the signs of grace; it still remains true, that *uncertain* signs of grace may be *probable*, *highly probable*, and *most probable* signs of sincerity, in those who exhibit them. And, upon this solid ground, the church may form a rational as well as scriptural judgment of charity, concerning those, whom they admit to communion in christian ordinances.

We now pass to consider the Doctor's distinction between a *private* and *public* judgment of charity.

“ There is,” says he, “ a distinction between the
 “ judgment of charity, and an absolute belief of the
 “ good estate of professors, which is plainly intimat-
 “ ed by fundry of our approved divines. Thus
 “ Mr. Shepherd distinguishes between *church char-*
 “ *ity*, and *experimental charity*, as he phraseth it.
 “ Meaning by the former, that hope, which we
 “ ought to have concerning professors in general,
 “ and their children; and by the latter, that more
 “ confident persuasion, we may have of the sincer-
 “ ity of some, who adorn their profession in a pe-
 “ culiar manner. So Mr. Edwards distinguishes
 “ between the *public* and *private* judgment. And

“ he plainly holds, that men, whose profession and
 “ conversation are unexceptionable, are to be re-
 “ garded as objects of public charity, whatever sus-
 “ picions and fears any may entertain from what
 “ they have observed.”

The Doctor produces these authorities to confirm his representation of the judgment of charity, which he says is founded upon evidence, which does not oblige us to *believe* or *think*; in our private opinion, that the person, who exhibits it, is a saint in heart. To demolish this distinction between a *public* and *private* judgment of charity, I would observe,

1. It is impossible to form such a judgment of charity as the Doctor pleads for. In the exercise of *christian* charity, which excludes bias, prejudice, or prepossession, our judgment, in favor or against any person, will be in exact proportion to evidence. We shall neither believe more nor less concerning his piety, than the evidence, which he exhibits, obliges us to believe. If he exhibits *probable* evidence of grace, we shall judge that he is gracious; but if not, we shall judge that he is graceless. This will be our real opinion. And the reason of it is obvious. In the exercise of christian charity, we cannot believe *without* evidence, nor *against* evidence. And this holds true, in respect to a *public* as well as a *private* judgment of charity. We cannot form a *public* judgment of charity in favor of any one's piety, upon any evidence, which will not oblige us to form the same *private* judgment of his sincerity. The truth of this every one may perceive, by attending to the exercises of his own mind, in forming any particular opinion. It is palpably absurd to suppose, that the church can form a *public* judgment of charity in favor of a proponent, upon that very evidence, which obliges them to believe, in their *private* opinion, that he is destitute of grace.

2. The

2. The Doctor's representation of the judgment of charity, stands fairly refuted by Mr. Edwards, in those very passages of his Book, which he has referred to, in support of it. He says, "Mr. Edwards distinguishes between the *public* and *private* judgment." It is true, he does make a distinction between the *public* judgment of the church, and the *private* opinion of individual members, with great propriety and precision. And this distinction follows his most just and accurate definition of the judgment of charity. I will give both in his own words,* which deserve to be read and understood, by every one who wishes to be acquainted with the sacramental controversy.

"When I speak, in the question, of a being godly or gracious in the eye of a *christian judgment*, I intend something further than a kind of mere *negative* charity, implying that we forbear to censure, or condemn a man, because we don't know but that he may be godly, and therefore forbear to proceed on the foot of such a censure or judgment in our treatment of him: As we would kindly entertain a stranger, not knowing but in so doing we entertain an angel or precious saint of God. But I mean a **POSITIVE JUDGMENT**, founded on some *positive* appearance, or visibility, some outward manifestations that *ordinarily* render the thing **PROBABLE**. There is a difference between suspending our judgment, or forbearing to condemn, or having some hope that possibly the thing may be so, and so *hoping the best*; and a **POSITIVE JUDGMENT** in favor of a person. For an having some hope, only implies that a man is not in utter despair of a thing, though his *prevailing opinion may be otherwise*, or he may suspend his opinion. Though we can't know a man believes that *Jesus is the Messiah*, yet we expect

“ some *positive* manifestation or visibility of it, to
 “ be a ground of our charitable judgment : So I
 “ suppose the case is here. When I speak of *chris-*
 “ *tian* judgment, I mean a judgment wherein men
 “ do properly exercise reason, and have their rea-
 “ son under the due influence of love and other
 “ christian principles ; which don’t blind reason,
 “ but regulate its exercises ; being not contrary to
 “ reason, though they be very contrary to censori-
 “ ousness, or unreasonable niceness and rigidness.”

This great man here supposes, that the judgment
 of charity is founded on *positive* evidence, and such
positive evidence as amounts to such *probability* as
 obliges a man to have more than a bare hope, even
 a *prevailing* opinion, that the person, in whose fa-
 vor he forms it, is a subject of grace. This judg-
 ment of charity he also supposes, each member of
 a church must form, in favor of any particular per-
 son, whom he votes for, or admits to full commu-
 nion. But in case there is a diversity of opinions
 among the members of the church, as to the ad-
 mission of a particular proponent, then this judicious
 Author makes a distinction between *public* and *pri-*
vate charity ; or between the judgment of the ma-
 jority and the judgment of the minority in the
 church. This distinction now follows in his own
 words.

“ I say in the eye of the CHURCH’S judgment,
 “ because it is properly a visibility to the eye of
 “ the *public* charity, and not of a private judgment;
 “ that gives a person a right to be received as a
 “ visible saint by the PUBLIC. If any are known
 “ to be persons of an honest character, and ap-
 “ pear to be of good understanding in the doctrines
 “ of Christianity, and particularly those doctrines
 “ that teach the grand condition of salvation, and
 “ the nature of true saving religion, and publicly
 “ and seriously profess the great and main things
 “ wherein

“ wherein the essence of religion or godliness con-
 “ sists, and their conversation is agreeable ; this
 “ justly recommends them to the good opinion of
 “ the PUBLIC, whatever *suspensions* and *fears* any
 “ particular person, either minister, or some other,
 “ may entertain, from what he in particular has ob-
 “ served, perhaps from the manner of his expressing
 “ himself in giving an account of his experiences,
 “ or an obscurity in the order and method of his
 “ experiences, &c. The minister, in receiving
 “ him to the communion of the church, is to act as
 “ a *public officer*, and in behalf of the public so-
 “ ciety, and not merely for himself, and therefore
 “ is to be governed, in acting, by a proper visibili-
 “ ty of godliness in the eye of the PUBLIC.”

Mr. Edwards is, in this place, speaking of the
 proponent's right to be admitted into the church.
 And he founds his right of admission upon the charity
 of the church in general. And to fix his meaning,
 he not only uses the most guarded expressions, but
 puts the word Church in capitals, to distinguish
 it from the pastor, or a few individual members,
 who might differ from the majority in their private
 opinion of the proponent's qualifications for admis-
 sion. He does not say, that those who entertain
scruples and *fears* about the piety of the proponent,
 ought to vote for his admission, contrary to their
 private opinion ; but only that *their* private opin-
 ion ought not to lead them to *object* against his ad-
 mission, or deter the pastor from being active in
 admitting him agreeably to the good opinion of the
 major part of the church. If it be possible to col-
 lect a man's opinion from his most precise and ac-
 curate declaration of it, we have a right to say,
 that Mr. Edwards did not maintain that opinion,
 with respect to the *judgment of charity*, which the
 Doctor represents him as holding, but quite a dif-
 ferent one. His distinction between a *public* and

private judgment has respect solely to the conduct of individuals, whose private opinion of a proponent's qualifications differs from the *private* opinion of the *public*, or majority of the church. And he is so far from supposing, that an individual brother ought to vote for a proponent, contrary to his *private* opinion, that he expressly declares, that every brother must have a *private* positive judgment of charity in favor of every one, whom he admits into the church. And this sentiment he keeps up, and carries through his accurate and masterly Treatise on the terms of communion,

Had the Doctor found any expressions in Mr. Edwards's works, which appeared to contradict his own opinion upon the sacramental subject, he would have had a good right to have quoted Mr. Edwards against himself. But he had no right to quote Mr. Edwards's words, in which he defines and declares his opinion, in direct contradiction to his own declarations, and virtually say, that Mr. Edwards does not mean, what he expressly declares he does mean. Mr. Edwards knew how to make a man *feel* the impropriety of such conduct.

3. The Doctor's representation of the judgment of charity in his Remarks, is refuted by his own representation of it in his Discourse. In that, he says, "As we have no certain evidence of inward sanctification in another, no more can be discern-
"ed than fallible signs, which give us reason to
"hope and judge it PROBABLE, that such a man is
"a saint in heart. This is all the visibility which
"grace has in the eye of charity. And the JUDGE-
"MENT MUST KEEP PACE WITH THE EVIDENCE
"ON WHICH IT IS GROUNDED." Here the Doctor declares, that the judgment of charity must be founded on *positive* evidence, and such positive evidence as gives *reason* to *hope* and *judge* that it is PROBABLE, the person, in whose favor it is formed,

is a faint in heart ; and this judgment must keep pace with the evidence, upon which it is grounded.

But, in his Remarks, he says, “ We may hold
 “ and receive a person as a true faint, in a *judg-*
 “ *ment of charity*, of whom we have no such evi-
 “ dence as will *oblige* us to determine, whether it
 “ is PROBABLE he is a faint in heart.” These two
 representations are contradictory, and one must re-
 fute the other. The last does not refute the first ;
 but the first fairly refutes the last. The first is
 founded in reason, and corresponds with the com-
 mon sense of mankind. They know that their
 opinion ought never to fall short of, or go beyond,
 the evidence upon which it is founded ; and that
 they neither can nor ought to believe and disbe-
 lieve at the same time, that a man is a faint in heart.
 In a word, the Doctor’s representation of the *judg-*
ment of charity, as being different from a man’s
 cool, candid, impartial, *private* opinion, is contrary
 to his own strong reasonings, the common sense of
 mankind, and the authority, which he has cited to
 support it.

Now, if the Doctor’s notion of the judgment of
 charity be false, then all his reasonings, built upon
 it, are inconclusive. So that there is no occasion
 of following him any further in this chapter. The
 doctrine, which we endeavored to support in the
 Dissertation, will bear its own weight, so long as the
 judgment of charity, upon which it rests, remains
 firm and immoveable. For, if the church must
 have a *prevailing* opinion in favor of the piety of
 every one, whom they admit to communion, then
 they may not admit any who *appear to them* desti-
 tute of this scriptural qualification.

CHAPTER VI.

The Doctor's Remarks on "the duty of access to the Lord's table," considered.

WE attempted to prove, in the Dissertation, by four distinct arguments, that none but real saints ought to come to the Lord's supper. In reply, the Doctor says, "*doubting sinners* ought to come." But this principle, on which he builds all his remarks on this head, we have already considered, and, perhaps, sufficiently refuted.



CHAPTER VII.

General observations on the Doctor's scheme.

HAVING attended to the Doctor's Remarks on the *Dissertation*, I might now consider his Remarks on the *Strictures*. But his observations on these are so destitute of that *meekness of wisdom*, which so *visibly* appears in his person, and in some of his most ingenious productions, that, for his sake, and the sake of religion, I shall pass them in deserved silence; and only make a few general observations on his reconciling scheme.



S E C T. I.

The obscurity of the Doctor's scheme illustrated.

HIS scheme is built upon obscure principles, which spread obscurity through the whole. He founds the right of admission, on a supposed distinction between a *public* and *private* judgment of charity. This distinction is so obscure, that he is unable, with all his metaphysical acumen, to set it in a plain and consistent light. He says, the church may, in a *public* judgment of charity, *repute, receive,* and *regard* a man as a saint in heart, who, at the same time, they neither think nor believe, in their *private* opinion, is a subject of grace. Their *public* and *private* judgment of charity may be totally diverse. Is this conceivable? Let a man only try to form a clear idea of such a distinction, and
 he

he will find that it cannot be distinctly perceived. This difficulty the Doctor labored under, both in his Discourse and in his Remarks ; and, therefore, it is not strange, that he involved both himself and his readers in great obscurity, with respect to the right of admission.

No particular church can reduce his opinion to practice, in their admission of members. If he had told them, that they must admit all *visible* saints, and had described such persons intelligibly, they might have followed his direction. But, instead of this, he has told them, that they must admit all such, as, in their judgment of charity, they *repute* and *believe* to be saints in heart ; though they have no reason to think, in their more private and more impartial opinion, that they have the least degree of grace. This must throw them into great embarrassment. For, they cannot repute and believe those to be saints in heart, in their *public* judgment, who, in their *private* opinion, they view as enemies to all righteousness. They will find it impossible, therefore, to reduce the Doctor's opinion to practice, in the admission of members ; but must either adopt Mr. Stoddard's or Mr. Edwards's theory, and act upon it.

His notion of *access* is no less obscure and impracticable. For, he founds a person's right of access, not on his having grace, nor on his thinking he has grace ; but on his being *conscious* of believing the gospel, and consenting to its gracious covenant.

Here is a person, we will suppose, who wishes to act upon the Doctor's scheme, in coming to the sacrament. The Doctor tells him, he must not come, if he *knows* he is destitute of grace. Again he tells him, he must not come, merely because *he thinks* he has grace. But he tells him, he may and ought to come, if he is *conscious* of believing the gospel,

gospel, and consenting to the new covenant, though he has ever so many *doubts* and fears with respect to a state of grace. The person makes a pause, and reasons upon the matter. "How is all this? I may not come, if I *know* I am graceless. This is plain, whether it be true or not. I may not come merely because *I think* I have grace. This is also plain, whether it be true or not. But, I may and must come, if I am *conscious* of believing the gospel, and consenting to the covenant of grace, though I fear my heart is not right with God, and though I am really his enemy. This is dark. I know not what to do. It is true, I am *conscious* of believing the gospel and consenting to its gracious covenant. But, I know there is an essential difference between true and false love; or between loving God and divine things, for their own intrinsic excellence, and loving them from selfish and mercenary motives. And I must either determine whether my believing the gospel and consenting to the covenant of grace, arises from *true* love to God, or else leave this great point undetermined. The Doctor says, I may leave this wholly undetermined. But does the Scripture say the same? I no where find the scripture allows me to have selfish affections towards God and Jesus Christ. Nay, I find, on the contrary, that those who felt and expressed high affections to God and Jesus Christ, from mere mercenary motives, finally proved to be the enemies of God and crucifiers of Christ. I *must* determine, therefore, whether my religious affections are true or false. But, if I must determine this important and difficult point, I am still left in darkness and perplexity, and can find no light nor relief from the Doctor's scheme. It takes me off from Mr. Stoddard's scheme, indeed, which allows those who *know* themselves to be graceless to come to the sacrament; and throws me into Mr. Edwards's scheme, which requires me

to have *true* love to God, and to have a *prevailing* belief that I have it, before I may come." A scheme, which involves those, who wish to embrace it, and reduce it to practice, in so much darkness and perplexity, must be extremely obscure. And this obscurity is no small evidence of its absurdity and falsehood.



S E C T. II.

The Doctor's scheme shown to be deficient in proof.

THIS defect in the Doctor's Discourse, we mentioned in the Dissertation. But, instead of supplying it, in his Remarks, he has offered only this feeble and unavailable apology. "As the Discourse on the Church is grounded mainly on principles in which christians are very generally agreed, it was thought it would be a saving of needless trouble and expence, not to insist much on the proof of *granted points*." This is a good concession, but a poor apology; because the case was very different from what the Doctor here represents. Though some points, respecting the sacramental controversy, are confessedly taken for granted on all sides; yet, the two fundamental principles of the Doctor's scheme never were, so far as our knowledge extends, either taken for granted or proved. A disputant ought to be lavish of his trouble and expence, in establishing his fundamental principles; otherwise, he is in danger of faring like the sluggard, who neglects to plough by reason of the cold, which reduces him to the trouble of begging in harvest, and to the mortification of denial at first, and famine at last. The Doctor's two leading principles, which distinguish and lie at the bottom of his

his peculiar, reconciling scheme, are these : That a *public* judgment of charity may be founded on weaker and lower evidence, than a *private* judgment of charity ; and that *doubting* sinners, in distinction from other graceless persons, ought to profess religion.

These two points are not taken for granted, nor proved, by Mr. Stoddard, as the Doctor might have known, if he had read him on the sacramental controversy. Mr. Stoddard maintains, that the sacrament is a converting ordinance, and that those, who know themselves to be graceless, ought to attend it. And in respect to admission, he maintains, that none ought to be received to communion but those, who make a *public* profession of their *faith* and *repentance*, to the *just satisfaction* of the church. This conveys no idea of a distinction between a *public* and *private* judgment of charity.

Mr. Edwards agrees with the Puritans in England, and the first ministers and churches of New-England, in denying both the fundamental principles of the Doctor's scheme. He, as we have shown from his own statement of the grand point in dispute, defines a judgment of charity to be a fair, candid, christian belief, founded on positive evidence, that a person is a saint in heart. And he uniformly pleads, through his Humble Inquiry, that the Church must build their public charity upon such evidence as *convinces* them, that the proponent is *probably*, or more likely than not, a subject of saving grace. Indeed, one of his arguments in favor of making the visibility of grace the term of admission, is drawn from that christian brotherly love, which is represented in scripture, as the peculiar bond of union among the members of a christian church, and which arises from their viewing each other, in their *private* opinion, as cordially united to Christ. And as to the right of *access*, he

insists

insists that none ought to come to the table of the Lord, but those who are true believers, and have such evidence of being in a state of grace, as is a good reason, in the view of their own rightly informed conscience, for their naming the name of Christ, and attending the memorials of his death. And in this, he also agrees with the Puritans in England, and the Compilers of our Platform and Confession of Faith.

Where, then, did the Doctor find the two fundamental principles of his peculiar scheme, either taken for granted, or proved? Certainly not in Europe nor America. It was, therefore, fairly incumbent on him to establish the foundation of his superstructure. He ought to have produced some solid arguments, to prove two such important points, which had never been admitted, nor proved before. But these two essential points, on which his whole scheme depends, he has left without support, both in his Discourse, and in his Remarks. And this gives us leave to say, that both his productions are essentially deficient, in respect to proof. But is this veniable in a polemic writer? Or can it pass for a mere infirmity?



S E C T. III.

Some of the inconsistencies in the Doctor's scheme pointed out.

IT is an old observation, that error is fated to run crooked. The most ingenious writer cannot reconcile truth and error; and, therefore, if he attempts to defend error, it will unavoidably lead him into inconsistencies. To this cause, rather than any other, we are ready to impute the great inconsistencies,

sistencies, which appear in the Doctor's Discourse and Remarks. But, since antagonists are extremely apt to charge one another with this fault, we will treat the matter fairly, and lay before the reader the very passages, which appear to be irreconcilable, by any just and natural construction, that he may be able to judge for himself, whether the complaint of inconsistency has been well or ill founded.

1. There appears to be an inconsistency in the different representations, which the Doctor has given of *covenanting*.

He says, page 11th of the Remarks, "The reason why adult persons are not ordinarily taken into God's covenant *without their personal consent* is, because this is the will and pleasure of God, *not because he has not power and right to take whom he will into covenant, without their personal consent, whenever he pleases.*"

But, in his Discourse, he says, page 11th, 12th, "The call of the gospel requires all who are favored with it to give a serious attention to its proposal—and *cordially consent* to the gracious covenant which it reveals and offers to the children of men. *When they have thus* (by cordial consent) taken the *bond* of the covenant on them, there are further duties immediately enjoined; duties which belong not to those *who are not in covenant* while such. The gospel contains precepts which are immediately directed to, and binding upon the consciences of those who are not in covenant, even all to whom the word of faith is sent. But it has also precepts which prescribe special duties to those *who are in covenant*, who are under *special obligation* to perform these and all other covenant duties. And *this special obligation* arising from their special relation and *engagements* to God, is, I conceive, what is to be understood by the *bond* of the covenant."

Now,

Now, if the *bond* of the covenant arises from men's *cordial* consent to it, then they cannot be laid under the *bond* of it, *without* their cordial consent. To say, therefore, as the Doctor does, that God can lay men under the *bond* of the covenant, which arises from their cordial consent, without their cordial consent, will probably appear to the judicious and impartial, to be a plain and palpable contradiction.

2. The Doctor both asserts and denies, that the church must admit none to communion, but such as they think, *it is probable*, are faints in heart.

In page 42d, of the Discourse, he says, "There may be evidence sufficient to make it *visible to the eye or judgment of rational charity*, that a person is a faint in heart, though it be not sufficient to make it certain that he is really such an one. And it is the visibility of inward sanctification to the eye of charity, by the light of *probable*, though uncertain evidence, which gives one the denomination of a visible faint : *So that the holiness supposed is holiness of heart*. But its being visible does not mean that it can certainly be seen or known to be real, but only that it is *probable* or credible, which in the account of charity is satisfactory evidence of its truth or reality. I grant there may be visible and sufficient evidence of the PROBABILITY, or credibility of a man's being a faint in heart, and that in the *eye or judgment of charity*, he is to be *reputed*, and *received* as if he were such. And we may say that he is *visibly* such a one to the *eye of charity*." "I think," says he, page 48th, "none ought to be accounted visible faints *in whom* there are not *visibly preponderant* grounds of hope."

But, notwithstanding these declarations in favor of the church's having *probable* evidence of the gracious sincerity of all whom they admit to communion ;

tion ; yet he says, page 46th of the Discourse, “ If
 “ we cannot know whether one is a visible saint,
 “ till we know whether there be a PREPONDERANT
 “ PROBABILITY that he is sincere, I think we shall
 “ never be able to determine this till the day of
 “ judgment.”

These different representations the Doctor fore-
 saw would appear to some either paradoxical or in-
 consistent ; for he immediately subjoins to the last
 quoted passage his apprehension, that “ this will
 “ sound like a paradox to some.” And in page 49th
 he expresses the same apprehension of being thought
 to be inconsistent in his use of the term *probable*.
 “ If it be thought improper to term that evidence
 “ *probable*, which may yet be supposed to fail in
 “ most instances ; I am not concerned to defend
 “ the propriety of using the phrase in this manner ;
 “ a phrase not found in the scriptures in any sense,
 “ but coined in the schools.” The Doctor’s apprehensions were not groundless, for he has been supposed to be paradoxical and inconsistent ; which has given him a fair opportunity of attempting to explain himself, and reconcile his supposed inconsistency. His attempt follows. “ I grant, however, that a church judging merely from *what appears in a professor*, may have more evidence of his sincerity, than signs of hypocrisy. And if what Mr. E. has quoted to this purpose, comes fully up to his sentiment, as he says ; I think it may easily be made to appear, that it is not inconsistent with what was quoted by him a little before, “ that we shall never be able to determine, till the day of judgment, whether there be a preponderating probability in favor of a professor.” For though the evidences of grace, which *appear in him*, are supposed to outweigh the evidences of a graceless state, which may *appear in him*, and consequently judging merely from *what appears*

“ in him, it is most *probable* that he is sincere ; yet
 “ there is *other evidence* in the case, besides what
 “ *appears in him* ; evidence which the judgment
 “ of charity makes no account of, as not being ad-
 “ missible by the rule of the gospel *in foro ecclesiæ*.
 “ And that is, the testimony of the scriptures, that
 “ many visible saints, who give clear and striking
 “ evidence of real piety, many whose life, and creed,
 “ and profession are good, so far as the church can
 “ discern, many whom they are evidently bound
 “ to receive as true saints, are yet graceless, com-
 “ pared to foolish virgins, who have taken their
 “ lamps without oil in their vessels. And we know
 “ not how many will be found to have been of this
 “ character ; and so cannot determine whether this
 “ might not turn the scale of probability against a
 “ professor, notwithstanding the hopeful signs which
 “ appear in him ; if we could estimate the weight
 “ of it, and were to take it into our account.

“ In this manner I had carefully explained my
 “ meaning ; and now I freely leave it to the intel-
 “ ligent reader to judge, whether what Mr. E. calls
 “ my concession and assertion, do not harmonize.
 “ And whether his taking no notice of the explana-
 “ tion which was given, is acting the part of a fair
 “ and manly disputant, or a caviller.”

It is the part of a fair disputant, to detect fallacy,
 and lay open the truth. So far as the Doctor’s ex-
 planation discovers his meaning, just so far it dis-
 covers his inconsistency. He says he means to
 hold, that we ought to take in *more* evidence in
 forming a *private* judgment of charity, than a *pub-
 lic* one. In a *public* judgment of charity, he says,
 we ought to take in only the evidence which ap-
 pears in the proponent himself ; but in a *private*
 judgment of charity, he says, we ought to take in
 “ other evidence,” that is, “ the testimony of the
 “ scriptures, that many visible saints are insincere.”

But,

But, if *this other evidence*, as the Doctor calls it, *can be taken into the private judgment, it cannot be excluded from the public.* For, what the scripture says concerning false professors is *known and believed* as much, when we form a *public*, as when we form a *private* judgment of charity. And we are no more forbidden to take what the scripture says on this point, into our account, when we form a *public* than when we form a *private* judgment, of a person's piety. The truth is, we cannot take this other evidence into our account in either case; because, what the scripture says leaves the matter altogether uncertain. But, even supposing it did ascertain the exact proportion between true and false professors, yet the Doctor allows, this ought to have no influence in forming a judgment of charity. "However," says he, in the 48th page of his Discourse, "there is no inconsistency in supposing that
 "there may be greater evidences of sincerity than
 "of hypocrisy *in each visible saint*, though it were
 "at the same time supposed that the *greater part*
 "were hypocrites. For the evidence we may have
 "of the hypocrisy of others, how many soever, *ap-*
 "pears not in those of whom we judge charitably." The Doctor here declares, that what he calls "the
 "other evidence," cannot be taken into our account, when we form a charitable judgment of a person's piety, because it does not appear *in him*.

But yet, he says, a *public* judgment of charity may be formed in direct contrariety to a private judgment of charity. And he strenuously maintains, that the church must, in their *public* judgment of charity, really think it is *probable* that each person, whom they admit to communion, is a saint in heart; when, at the same time, in their *private* opinion, they not only *may*, but *must* think, all things considered, that it is *not probable* each person, whom they admit to communion, is a subject of
 saving

saving grace. This appears to us an absolute inconsistency. And it appeared so to Mr. Edwards. Speaking upon this very point, he says, "Surely nothing but *appearing reason* is the ground of a rational judgment. And indeed it is impossible, in the nature of things, to form a judgment, which at the very time we think to be not only without, but against PROBABILITY."

3. The Doctor asserts and denies, that those, who come to communion, must have *probable* evidence of their own piety, or gracious sincerity.

In the 79th page of his Discourse, he says, "If, after careful examination of myself by the word of God, I find hopeful marks of sincerity, not invalidated by evidence of hypocrisy, I find more reason *in myself* for comfortable hope, than self-condemnation. This I call *credible evidence of sanctification in the view and the account of conscience*. And this I think all who come into church communion ought to have."

But, in the 77th page of his Discourse, he says, "I would not be understood to assert, that it is necessary for a man to be assured, or confidently or *prevailingly persuaded* of his being inwardly sanctified." And he observes again in the 79th page, "A profession of christianity is credible evidence to the church that the professor is a christian, though it is not known whether the greatest part of professors be such. And if I am not conscious of hypocrisy, this is a credible evidence in my own conscience that I am sincere. But as I know not whether the greatest part are sincere christians, who are *unconscious* of hypocrisy, how can I know whether this amounts to a *preponderant* probability?"

But, what influence can this uncertainty have upon any man's opinion of himself? If he finds marks of grace in his own mind, which amount to

probable

probable evidence in his favor ; how can his uncertainty about the exact number of self-deceivers, either weaken or strengthen this *probable* evidence ? It ought to have no concern in his forming his opinion of himself. But, if it does have any concern in this matter, it must either *increase* the probability in his favor, arising from the signs of grace, which he perceives in his own mind ; or else, on the contrary, wholly *destroy* that probability. So that it falls nothing short of a plain inconsistency, to maintain, that a man ought to think it is *probable*, and at the same time, ought to think it is *not probable*, that he is a subject of special grace, in order to come to church communion.

4. The Doctor affirms and denies, that none ought to come to the sacrament, but those who have a good reason for doing so, in the view of a rightly informed conscience.

In page 74th of his Discourse, he tells us, “ No man can act morally without some reason. Nothing can be reasonable to any one till he has a view or apprehension of it : Nor has he a right to act upon any reason or motive unless it appears to him good and sufficient, and be *rightly* judged to be so. If we judge the reasons prompting us to do an action, to be sufficient when they are not, our *unreasonable judgment* gives us no reason to act according to it. It is an *unfaithful guide*, and ought to be corrected. It must be the *dictate of a right conscience*, discerning and approving the reasons for doing any thing to give us a right or warrant to do it.” In the next page he adds, “ This then we lay down as a principle, or maxim. No one has a right or warrant to come into the church, who has not sufficient reason for doing so, in the view of his own mind ; and whoever has such a reason has undoubtedly a warrant to come, whatever doubts he may have
“ respecting

“ respecting his spiritual state, and whatever his
 “ state may be supposed to be. A good reason in
 “ view, is a good foundation, and the *only* founda-
 “ tion for the dictate of a *right* conscience to do
 “ any thing.”

But, he says, page 85th of his Discourse, “ Con-
 “ scious veracity or moral sincerity in assenting and
 “ consenting to the christian religion, makes a man
 “ a visible saint in the view of conscience, and gives
 “ him a warrant or right of access. It may be said,
 “ that if one judges his spiritual state to be better
 “ than it is, he deceives himself ; which he has no
 “ right to do ; and his error gives him no right to
 “ privileges. I answer, If he proceeds according
 “ to the rule and evidence by which he ought to
 “ judge in the case, he has judged rightly and reg-
 “ ularly, whether he has judged truly or not. Nor
 “ is it contrary to truth for one to judge that he
 “ has those marks of sanctification of which he is
 “ conscious, though he cannot conclude positively,
 “ from uncertain credibility, or probability what his
 “ state is.” And in the 91st page, he asks, “ May
 “ not an unconverted man be a visible saint in the
 “ *just account* of his own conscience, as well as of
 “ the church ? And is he not so, if he finds in him-
 “ self hopeful evidences of being a true christian,
 “ the holding forth of which entitles him to admis-
 “ sion to external communion ?”

Since nothing but grace can give any person real evidence of being in a gracious state, it necessarily follows, that no unconverted person can have real evidence, in the view of his own rightly informed conscience, that he is converted. Besides, a rightly informed conscience will discover to any self-deceiver, that he is in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. It discovered this to Paul, and it has discovered this to multitudes of self-deceivers since. It is wholly owing, therefore, to a person’s conscience

conscience being wrongly informed, that he ever thinks he has grace, while he is destitute of true holiness. So that no unconverted man can be a *visible* saint in the *just* account of his own rightly informed conscience. Where then can be the consistency of maintaining, that none ought to come to the sacrament but such as have *good* reason for doing so, in the view of a rightly informed conscience ; and yet maintaining, that some unconverted persons ought to come ?

If the Doctor had employed his celebrated pen in a consistent cause, we have no doubt but he would have written with his usual strength, perspicuity, and consistency. And, therefore, we are obliged to consider the weakness, obscurity, and inconsistency, which we have pointed out, as so many marks of the radical absurdity of his reconciling system. And if it cannot be supported by *his* hand, it must necessarily fall, for no other can give it a stronger support. But our cause, we trust, can be ably supported by others, though it may now suffer, by the weak and unskilful hand of its young and adventurous advocate.

I beg leave to express my own views of the management and issue of the present controversy, in the words of an able polemic writer.

I do not, as many persons would, except against all answers that may be written in a manner not perfectly consistent with the laws of *decorum*, or those in which I may think myself treated with too much *asperity*, or *ridicule*. There are few controversial writers, who, when the warmth of debate is over, may not see something of this kind to *blame themselves* for ; but those who are acquainted with human nature, will make allowances for such *human imperfections*, and attend to the *merits of the case* ; and it may be depended upon, that the *real weight of argument* is the thing that will decide in the end, when

when every thing of a *personal nature*, in the course of the controversy, will be forgotten.

If I were disposed, as I am not, to plead for *mercy*, I would allege the extreme unpopularity of my side of the question; and that, a man who writes with the full tide of popular opinion in his favor, has no occasion for any *indirect method* of bearing down his antagonist. It is the man whose opinions are unpopular that stands in the most need of the arts of address; and in him they would be most excusable. But, notwithstanding this, I shall trust my very unpopular argument to its native strength or weakness, without any artificial support whatever.

T H E E N D :













